PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION IN EAST SUFFOLK.

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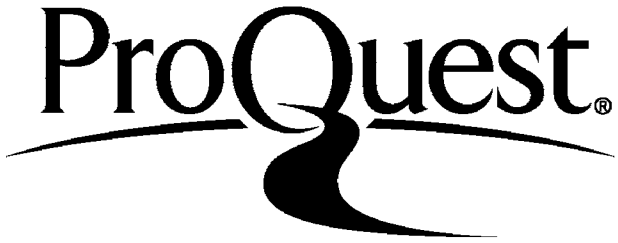

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ABSTRACT.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the problems involved in the provision of public passenger transport facilities in a part of Britain which has hitherto not received a great deal of attention from researchers in this field. Public transport provision in East Suffolk may be broken down into three distinct spheres of activity: railway passenger services, rural bus services and urban bus services, each faced with different operating environments but often facing similar problems. The threefold division is followed in this study but many cross references are made where certain problems are of general application.

The historical development of the present form of the public transport network of East Suffolk is examined in detail in order to trace the ways in which historical factors have influenced the present day difficulties facing the public transport operators. Chapters on the historical development of public transport by rail and road are followed by a number of more detailed studies of the problems faced by the operators at the present time and in the recent past.

The period when most concern was being expressed over the future of railway passenger services in East Suffolk was around the mid 1960s and the events which took place at that time are recounted in detail. In contrast, although concern over the threat to the survival of many rural bus services has been present since the mid 1950s, particularly severe difficulties began to be experienced during the early 1970s, continuing to the present time. There are few urban bus services in East Suffolk, only Ipswich and Lowestoft having municipal public transport systems. The problems which the two local

authorities are facing are similar in many respects and reflect on a smaller scale the problems involved in the provision of public transport services in much larger urban centres in other areas. Particular attention is paid to the problems of public transport operation in Lowestoft.

Wherever possible suggestions are made for possible courses of action which the operators might take to alleviate, if not solve, some of the problems which they are facing.

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List of Abbreviations.

In Text.

d.m.u.	diesel multiple-unit.
ECOC	Eastern Counties Omnibus Company.
ESL	East Suffolk Line.
'Heads'	Heads of Information, British Railways Publication.
ICT	Ipswich Corporation Transport.
LCT	Lowestoft Corporation Transport.
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen.
p.p.v.	persons per vehicle.
p.s.v.	public service vehicle
T.U.C.C.	Transport Users' Consultative Committee.
W.E.	Week ending.
Yarmouth	Great Yarmouth. Local inhabitants seldom use the complete name in normal communications.

In Reference Lists. (References, marked (1*) etc. listed after each chapter).

B & C	Bus and Coach.
BTR	British Transport Review.
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
IBG	Proceedings of the Institute of British Geographers.
MPTA Journal	Municipal Passenger Transport Association Journal.
PTA Journal	Passenger Transport Association Journal.
RIS	Railway Invigoration Society.
TPR	Town Planning Review.

SECTION 1: Introduction and Historical Development of Public Transport Facilities in East Suffolk.

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

The development of transport networks has interested British geographers throughout the present century and transport geographers, together with historians, economists, town and regional planners and transport enthusiasts, have combined to produce one of the more comprehensive records of the development of freight and passenger transportation systems for any developed country throughout the world.

Many accounts of the transport systems of Britain as a whole or of its component regions have tended to be directed towards features such as the causes for the creation of transport route networks and more recently, towards the problems raised by large scale national trends in public favour towards personal rather than mass transportation. On the local level town planners have been widely called upon to resolve the mounting problems of urban growth and congestion. However consideration of the problems of public passenger transport facilities has seldom been a major part of the planner's brief, which has often resulted from a desire to adapt existing environments to the problem (or challenge) of the motor-car.

Since the last war there have been a number of geographical studies of public transport facilities in specific areas, such as R. J. Johston's study of rural bus services in north-west Yorkshire (1*) and F. H. W. Green's study of bus services in rural Huntingdonshire (2*) but more frequently such investigations have been inspired from within the transport industry itself or its associated technical press. Most regional geographies include sections on the development of transport networks but such descriptions are usually and often necessarily superficial in their approach and mainly historical in content.

The purpose of this study is to examine in detail the development and present circumstances of the public passenger transport services of part of a region of Britain which has hitherto not been accorded a great deal of attention from transport researchers. Public transport in East Suffolk by both road and rail is examined to assess whether the networks of services which have been built up in the past century or more are suited to adapt to the problems which present day social and economic trends will increasingly present to transport operators during the remainder of the 1970s.

Throughout the study road and rail services have been examined separately although due references are made where certain problems were found to be common to both modes of transport.

Chapters 2 and 3 briefly describe the development of passenger transport services in East Suffolk by road and rail up to the close of the 1950s, the construction and organization of railway lines and the spread of urban and rural bus services.

Chapters 4 to 11 are concerned with the problems facing the railway administration and the travelling public of East Suffolk in the last two decades, with particular reference to the period of heightened concern following the proposals for widespread reductions in services put forward by Government sponsored reports in the early 1960s. The controversies which have arisen over the proposals for the future of individual railway lines in East Suffolk are examined in some detail.

Chapters 12 to 16 look at recent trends in the demand for stage-carriage omnibus services in East Suffolk. The problems facing the provision of rural and urban services are examined separately and

the organisation and structure of the services provided by the various operators are compared. Rural bus services are examined in the light of the greater emphasis on the provision of services for social necessity rather than as a business venture and services in the county as a whole have been looked at to gain an overall picture of present and possible future problems. Urban omnibus services in East Suffolk are concentrated principally in the towns of Ipswich and Lowestoft and to a lesser extent in Felixstowe. To enable the collection of data in great enough quantity to be of significance for drawing meaningful conclusions one town has been examined in detail (Lowestoft) and services in the other towns have been studied on a less intensive basis.

Chapter 17 adds some useful information on passenger transport services in relation to the growth and movement of the resident and employed populations of East Suffolk and based principally on the statistics contained in census returns. Unfortunately the results of the 1971 census were not published in time for consideration in this study but information contained in the 1966 sample census has been drawn upon to a large extent.

Although this study does not present a fully comprehensive coverage of the complex nature of the inter-relationships between the many social and economic problems involved in the provision of public passenger transport services in East Suffolk, it hopefully provides some useful background information on the trends in public transport provision which have caused increasing concern to both operators and users in the last two decades, as well as pinpointing some of the directions which the development of local transport systems are likely to or should take in the near future and some of the problems which still remain to be overcome.

References.

1. R J Johnston, 'An Index of Accessibility and Its Use in the Study of Bus Services and Settlement Patterns', Tijdschrift Voor Economische en Sociale Geografie, Volume 57, 1966.

2. F H W Green, 'Fifty Years of Bus Services in a Huntingdonshire Village: The Case of Buckden', Transport History, Volume 4, Number 1, March 1971, David and Charles.

CHAPTER 2.

The Development of Railway Services in East Suffolk 1840 - 1960.

The railway building boom was at its height throughout Britain in the middle decades of the Nineteenth Century and businessmen throughout the country were eager to invest their capital in the new growth industry of rail-borne transport.

Although East Anglia had few centres of population the area was the subject of many proposals for railway construction, many of which were based on tenuous forecasts of future traffic growth and the desire to beat rival companies rather than to serve the needs of the travelling public. As a result more lines were constructed than the economy of the region could support and those constructed towards the end of the century had a very weak economic base and were never economically sound. On many lines the desire for fast construction meant that they did not meet the optimum standards for gradients and significant centres of population were sometimes completely missed because of delays in negotiations with local land-owners.

East Anglia is generally considered to be 'flat' but physical features played an important part in shaping the decisions which resulted in the paths taken by the railway lines built to serve the area. The presence of long and wide estuaries along the coast prevented the establishment of a coastal line because of the expense and time that would have been needed to construct and later maintain the bridges. The Suffolk coastal towns of Felixstowe, Aldeburgh and Southwold thus found that their rail connections could only develop as branches from the main through line which followed an inland

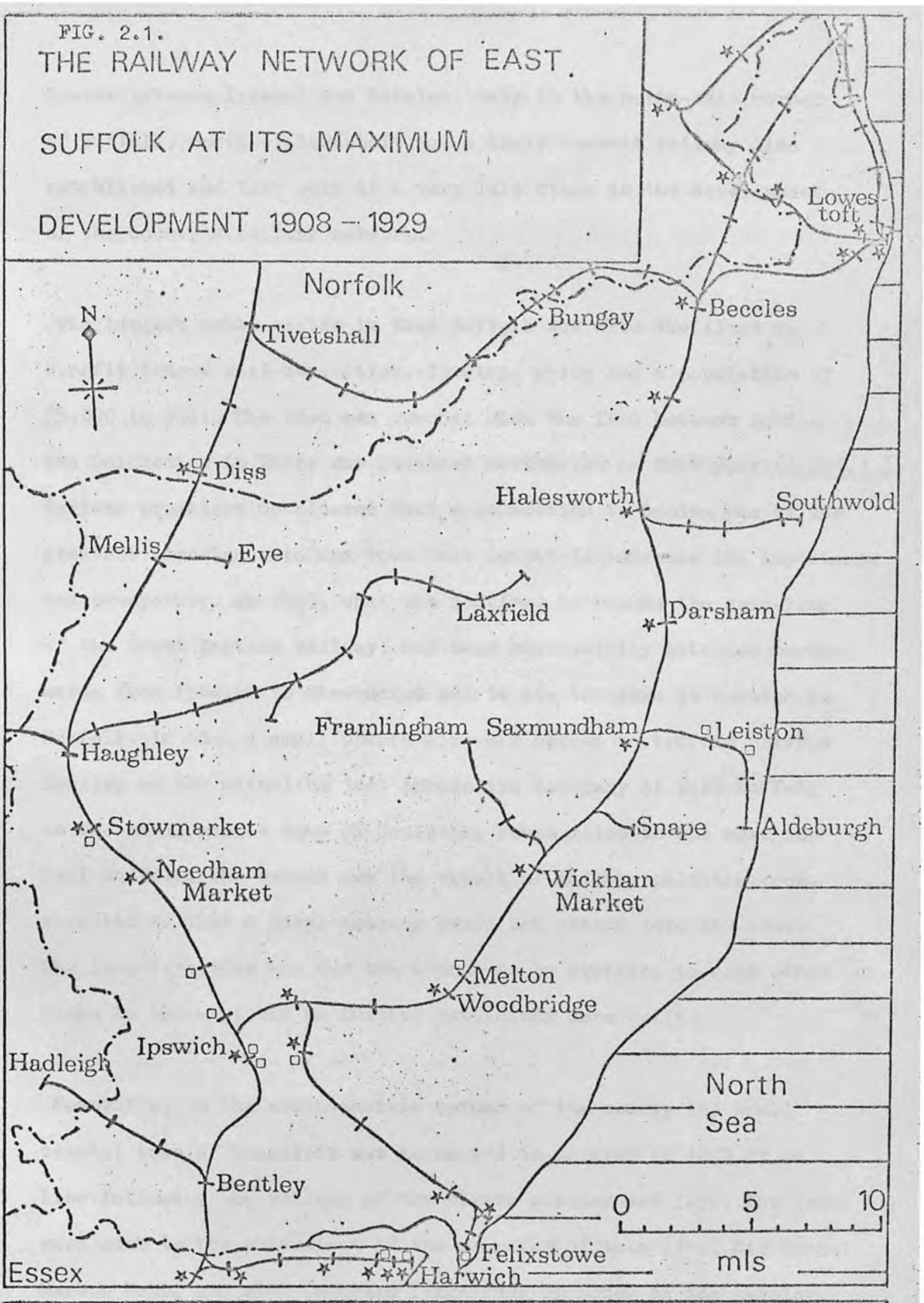


FIG. 2.1.
THE RAILWAY NETWORK OF EAST SUFFOLK AT ITS MAXIMUM DEVELOPMENT 1908 – 1929
Norfolk
N
Tivetshall
Bungay
Beccles
Lowestoft
Diss
Halesworth
Southwold
Mellis
Eye
Laxfield
Darsham
Framlingham
Saxmundham
Leiston
Haughley
Stowmarket
Snape
Aldeburgh
Needham Market
Wickham Market
Melton
Woodbridge
Ipswich
Hadleigh
North Sea
Bentley
0 5 10
mls
Felixstowe
Harwich
Essex
KEY
County Boundary
Railway line with station.
Passenger Station Open July 1972.
Goods Station Open July 1972.

course between Ipswich and Beccles. Only in the north-east corner of Suffolk, north of Lowestoft was a truly coastal railway line established and then only at a very late stage in the development of the county's railway network.

The largest urban centre in East Suffolk was also the first to benefit from a rail connection, Ipswich, which had a population of 25,000 in 1841. The town was reached when the line between London and Colchester in Essex was extended northwards in that year (fig 2.1). Railway promoters considered that a connection to London was of the greatest importance to any town that sought to increase its importance and prosperity. By 1849, what was destined to become the main-line of the Great Eastern Railway, had been successfully extended northwards from Ipswich to Stowmarket and to its terminus at Norwich in Norfolk. In 1847 a small branch-line was opened to traffic between Bentley on the main-line just inside the boundary of East Suffolk to the small market town of Hadleigh, seven miles to the west in West Suffolk. The branch was the result of railway politics, constructed so that a rival company could not extend into the area. The long-term plan was for the branch to be extended to meet other lines to the west but no further extensions were built.

Meanwhile, in the north-eastern corner of the county the small coastal town of Lowestoft was connected to Norwich in 1847 by a line following the valleys of the rivers Waveney and Yare. The town owed much to the enthusiasm of the promoter of this line, Sir Samuel Morton Peto, who also invested large sums of money in the development of harbour and holiday facilities near the railway terminus. Peto built an artificial harbour at Lowestoft and captured almost all of the trade of the small natural harbour at Southwold, ten miles to the south, which had no rail connection.

The link between Haughley, on the Ipswich to Norwich line, and Bury St. Edmunds in West Suffolk, opened as a branch-line in 1846 (1*) and by 1854 the line had been extended to Cambridge and become an important through route between East Anglia and the East Midlands.

Railway lines built in East Suffolk in the 1850s were planned so that construction costs could be kept to a minimum and ensure a quick return on investments. Nevertheless the East Suffolk Line (ESL) between Ipswich and Beccles, with extensions to Haddiscoe in Norfolk and to Lowestoft, took five years to be completed (1854 - 1859). Very low standards of construction were employed on the line, which followed the contours where possible but in places had very steep gradients rather than cuttings and embankments. Although these economies reduced construction costs they resulted in much higher operating costs in the long run (2*).

The 'Waveney Valley' railway between Tivitshall on the Ipswich to Norwich main-line and Beccles on the ESL took the eight years from 1855 to 1863 to be completed. The line followed the boundary between Norfolk and East Suffolk for much of its length and, although a potential cross-country route for traffic generated by the port of Lowestoft, never gained much status as most traffic to and from the coast continued to use the established route via Norwich.

In an attempt to gain traffic to utilise the spare capacity on the ESL a number of branch-lines were planned in the late 1850s and 1860s. The first of these to be completed was between Wickham Market junction and the small market town of Framlingham. The line was completed in 1859 but it never attracted much traffic and would doubtless not have been considered had modern economic evaluation techniques been available at the time. The second branch to be

completed was opened to traffic in 1860, between Saxmundham, Leiston and Aldeburgh. The last two branch-lines of the ESL were not constructed until the 1870s, to the coastal towns of Felixstowe and Southwold. In each case the coastal town was reached by a line from the nearest point on the main-line by means of a direct route through thinly populated rural areas. The first of these branches to be completed was between Westerfield Junction and Felixstowe. Felixstowe is situated on a peninsula between the estuaries of the rivers Deben and Orwell, both of which are still crossed only by small ferries at their mouths. Like Lowestoft, Felixstowe too owed most of its Nineteenth Century expansion to the efforts of one single-minded entrepreneur, Colonel Tomline, who succeeded in establishing the foundations of an important seaport and holiday resort.

The final branch-line to the ESL was routed from Halesworth to the small port and resort of Southwold and was opened to traffic in 1879. Although plans existed for some time to extend the line along the coast to Lowestoft no extensions were built. Traffic on the line never reached expectations, owing in part to the decision to build the line to a narrow gauge, which necessitated the transhipment of all goods and passengers at Halesworth, and also to the failure of Southwold harbour to compete with the much better served and equipped facilities at Lowestoft (3*).

Two short branch-lines were constructed in an easterly direction from the Ipswich to Norwich line. The first of these to be completed was opened to traffic in 1867 between Mellis and the small market town of Eye in the north-west corner of East Suffolk, three miles from the main-line. The line was promoted by the inhabitants of the town in an attempt to prevent its slow decline but failed in its objective. In the first decade of the Twentieth Century a line was

commenced with the objective of connecting the Ipswich to Norwich line at Haughley with the East Suffolk Line at both Halesworth and Westerfield. However, the promoting company, the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway Company, soon ran into financial difficulties and was unable to complete more than the short section of single-track between Haughley and the village of Laxfield. Instead of the through route first planned the line thus became an insignificant little branch-line serving a scattered rural population (4*).

Only two railway lines were opened to service in East Suffolk in the Twentieth Century and the second of these was the coastal line between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. Although both towns had been served by rail for nearly sixty years and were linked by a circuitous route via Haddiscoe (5*) it was felt that a direct coastal link would be of great benefit to recreational travel in the popular resort district between the towns. The Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth line was the only coastal route to be established in East Suffolk, in contrast to the situation in neighbouring Norfolk where easier physical geography permitted such lines to be widely established. The East Suffolk route was promoted by the Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway Company, which was also responsible for most of the similar lines in the north of East Anglia (1*,4*).

At its maximum extent the railway network of East Suffolk consisted of two categories of route; main-lines connecting towns with medium or large populations and, branch-lines connecting small towns and villages to junctions with the main-lines. Both types of line traversed wide areas of rural countryside with sparse populations and some of the smaller rural stations were very isolated. Most of the branch-lines were never more than marginally economic and were it

not for the gradual amalgamation of small companies into regional combines, culminating in the formation of the London and North-Eastern Railway in 1923, some of them may have been forced to close after only a few years operation. The fate of the Southwold Railway, the only line in East Suffolk to remain completely independent after 1923 suggests what might have happened to some of the other branch-lines. Competition from the omnibus services of the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company's predecessor, the Eastern Counties Road Car Company, became so severe that the railway was obliged to cease all operations in 1929.

The Hadleigh branch passenger service also ceased at an early date, surviving only until 1932. The line's indirect and slow approach to Ipswich caused it to lose most of its passenger traffic to the more direct motor-bus services.

Although some of the other small lines in the county must have been uneconomic by themselves, the overall profitability of the London and North Eastern Railway Company and its public service policy ensured their continuation until nationalization of Britain's rail-ways in 1948 brought about a re-examination of the necessity to retain such lines. The nationalized British Railways Board had to operate under conditions of stringent financial controls and reduc-tions in services and closures soon began to be put into effect in East Suffolk as elsewhere throughout the country.

Railway Passenger Service Withdrawals in East Suffolk During the 1950s.

The slow process of attrition of the railway passenger services in East Suffolk began during the early 1950s and more mileage was closed to passengers in the two years 1952/1953 than throughout the whole of

the 1960s. The countrywide early post-war travelling boom may have helped some of the less viable lines to survive for a few years but it soon became apparent that some of the Suffolk lines were becoming prohibitavely uneconomic.

The Framlingham branch was rather similar in character to the line which formerly served Hadleigh and the fact that passenger services to Framlingham survived twenty years longer, until 1952, probably resulted from the town's greater distance from Ipswich, which helped to maintain the railway's advantage of greater speed over competing bus services for a few more years (6*,7*). The sparse passenger service provided on the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway between Haughley and Laxfield was also eliminated in 1952. The two trains each way per day service had been an anachronism for several years and its withdrawal was hardly noticed by the local population. Perhaps if the proposed extension to Halesworth had been completed traffic might have been slightly greater but it seems unlikely that it could have reached a level great enough to ensure the survival of the line for much longer than it did.

In 1953 passenger facilities were withdrawn from the line along the Waveney valley between Beccles, Bungay, Harleston and Tivetshall. The line never gained much through traffic and traffic was being steadily lost to competing road services along the A143 road, which was parallel to the line for much of its length.

Railway Passenger Service Withdrawals in East Suffolk During the 1960s and 1970s.

Two further railway passenger services in East Suffolk have been withdrawn in the last decade, between Saxmundham and Aldeburgh in 1966 and between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth in 1970. The problems

which led British Railways to seek the closure of these lines and which still affect the operation of the lines which remain in the county are examined in detail in subsequent chapters.

The surviving passenger railway network in East Suffolk (1972) is much reduced from that which existed at the beginning of the century (fig 2.1)and (8*,9*,10*). Passenger carrying railway-lines still in operation in the county are detailed below (table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Passenger Carrying Railway-Lines in Operation in East Suffolk 1972.

Routes.	Length (miles). **	Number of Intermediate Stations.
(Colchester)-Manningtree-Ipswich	9	0
Ipswich-Diss-(Norwich)	27	2
Haughley-(Bury St. Edmunds)	2	0
Ipswich-Lowestoft	49	9
Westerfield-Felixstowe	12	2
Lowestoft-Somerleyton-(Norwich)	4	2
TOTAL	103	15 + 3 Termini

Note:**
Only those parts of through lines within East Suffolk are included in the table.

References:

1. D I Gordon, ' A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Volume 5 - Eastern Counties', David and Charles, 1968. Contains a detailed account of the development of the railways of East Anglia up to the present day, with sections on all the lines built or planned for East Suffolk.

2. J H Appleton, 'The Geography of Communications in Great Britain', Oxford University Press, 1962. Fig.10, P88 includes a gradient profile of the East Suffolk Line between Ipswich and Great Yarmouth, showing how the line cuts accross the drainage network of the area by means of steep gradients.

3. A Barrett Jenkins, 'Memories of the Southwold Railway', Jenkins, 1966. A brief history of the line up to its closure.

4. N A Comfort, 'The Mid-Suffolk Light Railway', Orchard Press, 1963. A full history of the line, including representative timetables.

5. A J Wrottesly, 'The Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway', David and Charles, 1970. A history of the network of lines based in Norfolk and Lincolnshire.

6. East Anglian Daily Times, 24/9/51. Framlingham parish council agreed that the line was uneconomic, although they were concerned about the adequacy of alternative bus services.

7. East Anglian Daily Times, 31/11/52. "The 6.52 pm train Framlingham to Campsea Ashe (Wickham Market) had averaged only 5 passengers a day and this is the reason for its withdrawal".

8. J A Patmore, 'The Contraction of the Network of Railway Passenger Services in England and Wales 1836 - 1962, IBG , Volume 38, June 1966. P106, three maps of lines closed to passengers, with dates.

9. J A Patmore, 'The Changing Network of British Railways', Geography, Volume 47, 1962. States that many rural branches never made a profit even when rail travel was at its peak.

10. G Daniels and L Dench, 'Passengers No More', Ian Allen, 1963. Lists dates of closure of all railway lines to both passenger and freight traffic up to 1962.

CHAPTER 3.

The Development of Omnibus Services in East Suffolk. 1880 - 1965.

In some respects the history of omnibus services in East Suffolk has followed a course similar to that followed by the railways except the time scale is much shorter. The rapid development of motor-bus services in the rural areas of East Suffolk during the 1920s and 1930s soon caused a decline in railway passenger services but from the early 1950s competition from private transport began to cause similar problems to the operators of stage-carriage omnibus services.

Municipal Public Transport in East Suffolk.

The development of the two municipal public transport systems in East Suffolk began in each case with the operation of trams. In Ipswich a horse powered service was opened to traffic in 1880 under private control and the route was purchased by the Corporation in 1901 (1*,2*,3*). A slightly extended system was electrified in 1903. The network developed a radial pattern centered on Cornhill next to the town hall. Ipswich was one of the first municipalities in Britain to introduce trolleybuses when, in 1923, they were put into service on the short route between Cornhill and the main-line railway station. The trolleybuses were so successful that the entire tramway system was replaced by 1926.

Motor-buses were not owned by Ipswich Corporation Transport until 1950 but the need for more flexible vehicles, due to steadily increasing traffic congestion in the town centre, led to the complete replacement of trolleybuses by 1963 (4*,5*).

In Lowestoft the Corporation commenced tramway operation with a

four mile route along the A12 trunk road through the eastern half of the town. The service commenced in 1904 and survived with very few alterations until 1931 when motor-buses, the first of which had been purchased four years earlier, were substituted (1*,2*,3*). The Corporation route network continued to be based on the former tram route but with extensions at the northern and southern edges of the town to serve new residential developments. Several routes were planned for the western part of the town but these could not be introduced because the Eastern Counties Road Car Company had already established several services through the area.

Privately Owned Omnibus Services in East Suffolk.

The Great Eastern Railway Company introduced several rail-feeder bus services at widely spaced locations throughout East and West Suffolk in the early years of the Twentieth Century, mainly in the Lowestoft and Felixstowe areas but large scale development of privately owned public transport operations on the roads of the county did not commence until the 1920s, when many surplus First World War vehicles became available for conversion for passenger service. The two most rapidly expanding companies at that time were United Automobile Services, which had been formed in 1912 to take over operation of the railway bus services in Norfolk and Suffolk, and the Eastern Counties Road Car Company, which developed an extensive network of rural routes in the Ipswich area from 1919 (6*). These two companies, together with the Ortona Motor Company based at Cambridge, merged in 1931 to form the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company Limited (ECOC), with a combined fleet of 544 vehicles.

The ECOC obtained a near monopoly in both stage and express bus services in East Suffolk by the 1950s, due largely to the policy pursued throughout the 1930s and 1940s of acquiring vehicles and

routes of as many independent operators as possible. One of the more important operators to be acquired was 'Bush and Twiddy Ltd', which had a network of express services based on Southwold and which was taken over in 1932. Other East Suffolk routes acquired included those of 'Garnham's Garage', Woodbridge, 'Durrant' of Hollesley and 'Hall' of Ufford, all in 1934 and 'Rivers' of Ipswich in 1945. The Eastern Counties Omnibus Company was nationalised in 1948 but its policy was unchanged and the services of 'Beeston' of East Bergholt and 'Faiers' of Felixstowe were acquired in 1951. Most of these small operators remained in existance in the fields of private hire and excursions.

As a result of the takeovers by the ECOC few independent operators with stage-carriage services remained in East Suffolk by the 1960s. This situation was in marked contrast to that in West Suffolk were a high proportion of rural stage services were still provided by small operators. A few routes operated by West Suffolk companies extend to Ipswich and Stowmarket and some long distance express services are operated by companies based well outside the county. Private hire operation in East Suffolk has remained mainly in the hands of the small operators (7*).

The problems which have faced the operators of bus services in East Suffolk are examined in detail in subsequent chapters.

References:

1. R C Anderson, 'The Tramways of East Anglia', Light Railway Transport League, 1969. Contains chapters on each of the two tramway systems in East Suffolk, giving details of operation from opening to closure, with maps. Chapter 4 - Ipswich, Chapter 5 - Lowestoft.
2. 'British Bus Fleets No 4 East Anglia', Ian Allen, 1967. Contains brief fleet histories of the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company, Ipswich and Lowestoft Corporations, and complete current list of vehicles owned.
3. R F Neale (ed) 'Fleet History PF1. Eastern Counties Omnibus Company Limited and the Corporations of Great Yarmouth, Ipswich and Lowestoft', P.S.V, Circle and The Omnibus Society, 1958. Contains complete histories of the operators with summary lists of all vehicles owned.
4. 'Public Transport 1949 - 1963', Ipswich Information, Number 37, Sept./Oct. 1970. Ipswich Corporation.
5. A G Newman, 'British Trolleybus Systems 16 - Ipswich', Buses, June 1972. A history of the trolleybus system in the town, including a map of authorised but unconstructed routes.
6. J Hibbs, 'The History of British Bus Services', David and Charles, 1968. P74.
7. P Clark, 'Bus Operation in East Anglia - The Private Sector', The Omnibus Society, 1971. Complete list of road service licences held by independent operators in East Anglia.

SECTION 2: Problems of Railway Public Transport Provision.

CHAPTER 4.

Problems of Railway Public Transport Provision in Britain in The 1960s and 1970s, With Particular Reference to East Suffolk.

In the 1960s the extent to which Central Government intruded into the management of Britain's railways was probably no greater than had been the case for the rest of this century but the effects which national policy decisions had on the rail-borne travelling public have been much more deeply felt because of the more drastic measures which have been put forward in recent years (1*).

A grand modernisation plan was introduced in 1955, involving the widespread introduction of diesel motive power in place of steam. At that time the diesel multiple-unit (d.m.u.) was thought to be a possible saviour for some of the lightly used rural services and some of the earliest examples were introduced on several lines in Suffolk and Norfolk (2*,3*). Nevertheless a gradual reduction in services was still thought to be necessary in East Anglia as elsewhere, culminating in the almost complete withdrawal of the former Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway System in 1959.

By 1962 the overall economic situation of British Railways had become so serious that the Government concluded that very drastic measures were necessary if the country's railway system was to survive as a viable economic entity. The programme which the Government elected to follow emerged early in 1963 in the report "Reshaping of British Railways", more commonly known as the Beeching Plan (4*).Beeching's conclusions were based around the notion that vast mileages of the existing British Railways network were completely uneconomic and could never be made to show a profit. The report put forward the recommendation that most of the lines proved to be

loss-making should be closed to all traffic as soon as possible and investment concentrated on the small number of profitable lines connecting the major cities and industrial areas. The Beeching plan drew a vast amount of comment, much of it very unfavourable and it quickly became a matter of some significance to politicians. (5*, 6*,7*).

The diversity of opinions about the validity of Beeching's findings may be judged from the comments of some of his critics. Editorial comment in the trade publication 'Modern Railways' was generally in support. In the case of the rural lines in East Anglia and elsewhere the criterion of economic viability was recognized to have serious consequences. The 'Modern Railways' review of the report came to the conclusion that:

"Therefore, even when there is freight traffic...stopping passenger traffic cannot be regarded as paying its full cost below a passenger density of about 10,000 (per week). Where there is no other traffic, routes carrying up to 17,000 passengers per week may barely pay their way." (5*).

On the other hand, L D Stamp, writing in the 'Geographical Journal', thought that wholesale withdrawal of rail passenger services could have disastrous consequences. He concluded that railways ought never to have been considered apart from the transport system of Britain as a whole and that there was an urgent need for a co-ordinated transport programme for all forms public and private passenger and freight transportation, before large scale closures were carried out and it was too late. (6*).

The Reshaping Report and East Suffolk.

The remaining railway services in East Suffolk were amongst those that were looked upon unfavourably in the reshaping report and their

history throughout most of the remainder of the 1960s was a direct consequence of this fact. Many of the report's general conclusions applied directly to the county's lines.

Stopping passenger trains were considered by the report to be highly uneconomic as a whole and overall they were thought to "show losses almost equal to total receipts against direct costs alone, and the overall loss is nearly twice receipts". The report also concluded that "quite high traffic densities are necessary, even on single-track routes, to cover route costs alone". As far as freight traffic was concerned, the report found that small goods depots were uneconomic and should be withdrawn and further "it has been concluded that, if the traffic is got rid of, the expenses associated with the traffic will not be saved effectively unless the stations themselves are closed, and where possible the route as well. It would serve little purpose to thin out the traffic without closing the stations" (4*).

All of these factors were present on the East Suffolk railway lines to varying extents. All routes in the county, including the Norwich-Ipswich-Colchester-London main-line, carried stopping passenger trains and traffic density of passenger trains was generally no higher than one per hour in each direction on double-track routes. Furthermore, many of the smaller country stations had already been deprived of their remaining goods traffic.

Holiday trains on summer weekends were looked on very unfavourably by Beeching's team because they necessitated the maintenance of rolling-stock for use on a small number of days each year (8*) and, unless some outside additional financial support could be obtained (9*) their withdrawal was to be a high priority. The importance of

seasonal holiday trains in East Suffolk is emphasized in the chapters relating to individual local lines (Chapters 5-11).

East Suffolk railway lines were amongst those listed in the Reshaping Report for complete closure. The lines concerned were the East Suffolk Line between Ipswich and Lowestoft, together with the continuation from Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth and the branch from Saxmundham to Aldeburgh. The Report further proposed that all stopping passenger trains should be withdrawn from the Colchester-Ipswich-Norwich line and that most intermediate stations should be closed.

The ways in which British Railways and local organizations reacted to the proposals made in the Reshaping Report helped to reveal the economic, social and political pressures which the threat of withdrawal of railway passenger services brings to bear on the railway administration, local authorities and local communities.

Firm proposals soon emerged for the closure of the East Suffolk Line between Ipswich and Lowestoft and the branch to Aldeburgh and the consequences are examined in detail in subsequent chapters. The proposal to withdraw the passenger service between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth was announced rather later and is examined separately.

References:

1. K M Gwilliam, 'Transport and Public Policy', George Allen and Unwin, 1963. An examination of the economic and political forces which have led successive governments to take an active hand in the direction of the ways in which transport investments are allocated. Chapter 10, The Railways.

2. C J Allen, 'Great Eastern', Ian Allen, 1959. History of railway services on the railway lines in East Anglia which were formerly under the control of the Great Eastern Railway Company, including the effects of the 1955 modernisation plan on passenger services.

3. D Bertram, 'Northern East Anglia - 1958', article in Trains Illustrated Summer Annual, No.3, 1959.

4. 'Reshaping of British Railways', HMSO, 1963.

5. 'The Beeching Plan', article in Modern Railways, May 1963, P302. Includes maps and statistics.

6. L D Stamp, 'Britain's Railway Policy', Geographical Journal, 1965, P375.

7. J A Patmore, 'The British Railways Network in the Beeching Era', Economic Geography, Volume 41, 1965, P71. Patmore concluded that many branch-lines never made a profit but rather acted as feeders to profitable main-lines. He thought that their ultimate place in the remaining railway network would depend more on political rather than straightforward commercial considerations.

8. G F Fiennes, 'Special Trains', Modern Railways, Oct. 68. Quotes a British Railways accountant as stating that a carriage cost £10 per day to maintain, whether running or idle.

9. 'Beeching and the Holiday Resorts', Modern Railways, June 1963, P365. "Continental visitors will be familiar with the Kurtax which is levied at many holiday centres as a percentage of guests' hotel bills and which goes to sustain local amenities. In Switzerland many minor railways... receive subsidies from the resorts

they serve. The Kurtax revenue might be used to meet the loss on maintaining the stock (for holiday peak extra trains)."

CHAPTER 5.

The Problems Revealed by the Proposal by British Railways to Withdraw the Passenger Service From the East Suffolk Line and the Aldeburgh Branch.

One of the early signs that the proposals of the Beeching Report were being actively pursued in East Suffolk was the steady reduction in the frequency and quality of both passenger and freight services on most lines. On the East Suffolk Line between Ipswich and Lowestoft and on to Great Yarmouth the reductions were drastic, especially with respect to through trains between Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and London, some of which were diverted via the longer route by way of Norwich, instead of the traditional route north of Ipswich via Beccles and the East Suffolk Line.

In 1965 British Railways published a formal notice that it wished to withdraw the railway passenger service between Westerfield Junction (Ipswich) and Oulton Broad North Junction (Lowestoft), involving the total closure of all intermediate passenger stations.A similar intention was expressed in connection with the Aldeburgh branch. Surprisingly the line between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth was not included in the closure proposal, especially as the northern limb had previously been included in a wholly integrated service between Great Yarmouth and Ipswich.

The concern which the proposed closures caused to the inhabitants of the county resulted in a large number of written objections from individual users and local organizations being sent to the Transport Users' Consultative Committee, which was mandated to examine and report on the level of hardship that would be caused if the lines were to be closed (1*). In its submission to the committee British Railways stated that the services were losing £23,500 annually,

resulting from direct expenditure of £178,300 compared with total earnings of £154,800. In the six week period following the formal closure announcement 1,914 letters were received by the committee, with the result that a public enquiry was legally required before a report could be made to the Minister of Transport, who had to give the final decision before a closure could take place. A summary of the arguments against closure on the grounds of hardship and the replies by British Railways was published in August 1965 (2*) and the main points raised included the following.

Most of the stations on the line were supported by local residents who stated that they needed to use trains for daily journeys to work and some of whom claimed that they would be forced to change either their places of work or their homes if the railway service were to be withdrawn. The highest levels of daily journeys by workers were (i) between Beccles and Lowestoft and (ii) between Saxmundham, Woodbridge and Ipswich. British Railways agreed that hardship would be caused to some workers if the East Suffolk Line were to close and suggested that a replacement bus service, to be operated by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company, would adequately provide for their needs, although it was agreed that journey times would be considerably extended in some instances.

A second group of rail users which claimed that considerable hardship would result from withdrawal of the rail service included students, scholars and local education authorities. Many students at Ipswich Civic College and who lived at Saxmundham, Wickham Market and Woodbridge (see fig 2.1) depended on trains,as did several students at Lowestoft Technical College who lived near the northern end of the line. A representative from Cransford Hall School at Saxmundham stated that most of the schools 57 pupils used trains at holiday

periods and a spokesman for Woodbridge School said that 93 of its scholars used trains half-term and termly as well as seven who used the railway daily. British Railways' reply to the problems which closure of the line would cause to students and scholars was that "the education authority is responsible for scholars transport". This was a standard statement made in respect of all rail closure proposals, which unfortunately took absolutely no account of how alternative transport was going to be provided or how much less convenient it would be for the children concerned.

A few objectors to the closure proposal stated that they had bought homes in the area only because of the exisence of the railway passenger connections to London and that, if the East Suffolk Line were to be closed, they would have no alternative but to move out of the area. Further objections came from representatives of the holiday industry, mainly at Lowestoft, Aldeburgh and Southwold, who felt that withdrawal of rail facilities would have an adverse effect on their income, although none could produce any firm figures to support this argument.

The public enquiry into the proposal to withdraw passenger services from the East Suffolk Line and the Aldeburgh branch was held at Saxmundham in September 1965 and many of those who had submitted written objections took the opportunity to appear before the committee in person. The major point of contention raised at the enquiry concerned the proposed replacement bus service, which British Railways and the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company claimed would provide an adequate substitute for the existing rail service.

At the time of the rail closure proposal the only through road

public transport service between Ipswich and Lowestoft was the twice daily 'East Anglian Express' service between London and Great Yarmouth via Ipswich, Southwold and Lowestoft, following the A12 trunk road. There was no bus service between Beccles, Halesworth and Ipswich, although the regular Eastern Counties Omnibus Company route 264 provided connections between Ipswich, Woodbridge, Wickham Market, Saxmundham, Leiston and Aldeburgh. So the major gap in the road public transport network in East Suffolk was between the northern and southern halves of the county, for which the railway provided the only convenient public transport link.

The compilation of a timetable for a replacement bus service that could adequately meet the needs of rail passengers deprived of their link between the northern and southern halves of the county set difficult problems. The fact that two of the larger intermediate stations on the East Suffolk Lime, at Beccles and Halesworth, were situated well away from the A12 trunk road meant that it was impossible to provide a reasonably fast terminal to terminal service and at the same time to serve all the intermediate railway stations. A limited stop service was proposed, with 17 stops between the railway stations at Lowestoft and Ipswich. This service, it was hoped, would have an overall journey time of 2 hr. 10 min., fifty minutes longer than the existing 1 hr. 20 min. by rail. The basic weekday **provision** on the proposed new service would have consisted of nine through journeys between Ipswich and Lowestoft and one fewer in the reverse direction. In addition there was felt to be a need for one additional return journey between Saxmundham and Ipswich and one between Halesworth and Lowestoft. Six return journeys between Saxmundham and Aldeburgh were thought adequate to cover for the withdrawal of the branch.

One of the principal objectives of the proposed replacement bus service was to provide connections at Ipswich railway station with trains to and from London. Many of the objectors contended that the proposed timetable was impossible. To demonstrate their case a group of objectors hired a coach to try and simulate a return journey according to the proposed timetable (3*). Starting from Lowestoft and making only the seventeen prescribed stops the coach arrived at Ipswich station 27 minutes late and missed the planned rail connection by 17 minutes. On the return journey the coach arrived at Lowestoft 40 minutes late, despite good weather and road conditions. By this means the objectors effectively proved that the proposed timetable for the replacement bus service was totally unworkable and that its implementation would lead to severe hardship to people who wished to use public transport for journeys between Lowestoft and Ipswich and many of the intermediate small towns.

The result of the bus timetable experiment and the huge weight of local opposition to the rail closure proposal persuaded the Transport Users' Consultative Committee to report to the Minister of Transport that a closure of the East Suffolk Line would cause severe hardship to many users. In eventually deciding against closure the Minister issued the following statement:

"The Minister has noted the T.U.C.C.'s view that the most severe hardship would occur to users of the Ipswich/Lowestoft rail route because the alternative road services proposed do not offer an adequate substitute, in the light of the volume of passengers to be lifted, the length of the journeys involved, and other inherent difficulties." (4*).

However, the Minister did not feel that a significant amount of hardship would be caused by the closure of the Aldeburgh branch to

justify the retention of the passenger service, as the proposed replacement bus service would provide a reasonable alternative.

The Aldeburgh branch had in fact been recognized as uneconomic for a number of years prior to the Beeching Report. In December 1960 the T.U.C.C. considered the line's future and decided that passenger services should be retained for a further five years, but only because of the possibility of its usefulness during the course of the construction of the nearby nuclear power station at Sizewell. The number of passengers using the Aldeburgh branch had been steadily declining for several years and by the time British Railways surveys were conducted in November 1964 and July/August 1965, had fallen to a very low level. Details of the British Railways surveys are included in Chapter 8.

Complete withdrawal of all passenger services from the Saxmundham-Aldeburgh branch, including the complete closure of the passenger stations at Leiston, Thorpeness and Aldeburgh, took place on 12th. September 1966 and the replacement bus service was introduced by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company from that date. The bus service ran mostly along roads used by existing routes, except that the new journeys terminated in Saxmundham at the railway station rather than the bus station 100 yards away.

An analysis of the statistical tables which accompanied the British Railways proposal to withdraw passenger facilities from the East Suffolk Line is included in Chapter 11, with particular reference to the extent of through journeys over the Lowestoft-Yarmouth line and south of Ipswich. In addition, comparisons are made with the findings of recent field research on the line in 1971 and 1972.

References:

1. East Anglian Daily Times, 29/9/65.

2. 'Heads of Information, Passenger Services, Ipswich to Lowestoft and Saxmundham to Aldeburgh', British Railways Board, 1965.

3. East Anglian Daily Times, 25/8/65.

4. Evening Star (Ipswich), 11/7/66.

CHAPTER 6.

The Problems Revealed by the Proposal by British Railways to Withdraw the Passenger Service From the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth Railway Line.

The one section of railway line in East Suffolk listed for closure in the 1963 Reshaping Report for which closure proceedings were not commenced in 1965 was the ten miles of line between Coke Ovens Junction (Lowestoft) and Great Yarmouth South Town station in the county of Norfolk. Following the closure of the line between Beccles and Great Yarmouth via Haddiscoe High Level in 1959, the coast line between Lowestoft and Yarmouth became operationally an integral part of the East Suffolk Line and, although a reversal was necessary at Lowestoft, many trains travelled throughout from London and Ipswich to Great Yarmouth.

The coastal line always had a rather different character to the main part of the East Suffolk Line. Whereas the line south of Lowestoft followed an inland route the northern limb ran both parallel and very near to the coast, in sight of the sea in several places. South of Lowestoft the stations were widely spaced but between Lowestoft and Yarmouth stations were close together, partly due to the denser population near the coast and also to assist in serving the needs of holiday visitors. Whereas the main-line was cheaply constructed, with steep gradients, sharp curves and many level-crossings, the Yarmouth line was mainly straight, gently graded and had only one minor level-crossing.

After 1959 the coast line was upgraded from branch to main-line status and an extensive programme of track improvements was commenced, to enable through working of express trains between Great Yarmouth and London. The improvements, most of which were undertaken in 1960

and 1961, involved the replacement of most of the line's trackwork and ballast and the construction of several new footbridges. By the summer of 1961 one of the highest passenger train frequencies ever operated over the line had been established. On Saturdays in the summer of 1961 there were 41 down (northbound) trains and 39 up trains timetabled to work over the line (1*). The large amount of capital expenditure on the line in the early 1960s seems to indicate that at that time its future was thought to be secure for a considerable length of time.

In 1962 some doubts seem to have arisen about the line's future, although rumours that closure was likely were denied by British Railways officials. In January 1962 it was reported that:

"British Railways have no intention of closing the Yarmouth to Lowestoft line or Gorleston Station', Mr. G. W . Brinyard, District Commercial Officer...said last night. 'The lines we proposed to close in this area have been closed. We have no other proposals in mind in this area for closure" (2*).

The year of Mr. Brinyards public statement the Reshaping Report was publisned, including recommendations that many lines in East Anglia should be closed, amongst them the line between Lowestoft and Yarmouth (3*). During the course of the public debate over the future of the main part of the East Suffolk Line south of Lowestoft, in 1965 and 1966, no reference was made by British Railways to the possibility of closure proceedings for the coastal section. However major alterations were taking place in the standards of service being offered to the travelling public. British Railways explained that drastic service changes, mainly reductions in quality and quantity (usually termed 'streamlining'), were necessary in order to cut

costs. Weekday passenger services over the coastal route in the summer timetable for 1963 consisted of 23 trains in each direction, of which ten were to and from Ipswich and nine to and from Beccles or Halesworth. Saturday services in summer 1963 consisted of 36 trains each way, of which 16 each way were to and from London Liverpool Street via the East Suffolk Line (4*).

By the summer of 1966 the passenger service on the Yarmouth line had been reduced to 'basic railway' standards, with 13 trains each way and no trains travelling through beyond Lowestoft, even on Saturdays (5*). In November 1967 trackwork was singled along the entire length of the line and all signalling was removed, all stations except for Lowestoft Central were de-staffed and some of the station buildings at Corton and Hopton demolished. All freight traffic had been diverted from the line by the end of 1967, only two years after British Railways had proposed to establish a large coal concentration depot at either Gorleston or Yarmouth South Town but was refused planning permission (6*), with the result that the depot was eventually established at Yarmouth Vauxhall station on the line between Great Yarmouth and Norwich.

The economic position of the line seems to have gradually deteriorated rather than improved as the rationalisation measures were implemented and the total withdrawal of freight facilities ensured that the remaining passenger service would show an accounting loss (3*).

Surprisingly, the closure proposal for the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth railway line was announced at the same time that most of the major economies, including track singling and station demolition, were being put into effect and it was therefore impossible to estimate

the full amount of the savings that might have resulted. The manner in which British Railways proceeded with the closure proposal lost them a great deal of local goodwill. When the closure was first proposed, late in 1967, the notice was accompanied by a statement to the effect that the legal proceedings where merely a formality so that the line could receive a social grant from the Government. However, social grant legislation had not yet passed through Parliament and British Railways was obliged to issue a public apology for making a false statement.

Four lines in Norfolk were receiving similar treatment at the same time and statements made in connection with one of them, between Kings Lynn and Hunstanton, indicate the low level which had been reached in British Railways relations with the local population. A report carried in a local newspaper in April 1966 included a statement by the Divisional Commercial Manager:

"Mr. Burton said he was now quite happy about the line. Business... is already improving and from figures it would seem that a £5000 a year profit or more could be anticipated" (7*). Despite this statement the Hunstanton branch was one of those proposed for closure the following year.

The bad public relations which British Railways were experiencing were put into perspective at the public enquiry, conducted by the Transport Users' Consultative Committee, into the proposal to close the Lowestoft - Great Yarmouth line. A total of 169 written objections to the closure proposal, on the grounds of hardship, were received by the committee. The 'Heads of Information' document produced for the committee, summarising the objections and British Railways' comments on them, showed that many of the claims of potential hardship were along similar lines to those received in connection with the earlier

proposal to close the line between Lowestoft and Ipswich (Chapter 5), (. 8*,9*). The public enquiry into the proposal to close the coastal line was held at Great Yarmouth town hall in September 1968.

The close relationship between the Yarmouth line and the main East Suffolk Line was raised by some of the objectors, who included students using trains connecting from Brampton and Beccles to attend Yarmouth Technical College and a small number of workers who lived in Halesworth and Beccles and who were employed in Yarmouth. Some workers living in Corton and Hopton complained that bus services to Lowestoft and Yarmouth would be much less convenient than the trains, an argument supported by two Eastern Counties Omnibus Company employees. Several holiday-camps along the coast expressed concern that the rail closure would affect their summer guests.

The total number of objectors and the scope of the objections was much more limited than was the case with the main East Suffolk Line, possibly due to the fact that alternative bus services between Lowestoft and Yarmouth were frequent and convenient for many rail users. The effectiveness of the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company service and the adequacy of the proposed additional journeys to compensate for the closure of the railway was questioned by several of the objectors present at the enquiry. It was suggested that the existing service, which ran at a fifteen minute interval during the summer peak period, was sometimes severely overcrowded and suffered frequent prolonged delays, due to heavy traffic congestion in both Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. One of the bus company employees (a conductor) pointed out that on some summer Saturdays late running meant that passengers could not rely on buses keeping to the time-table and that overloading sometimes led to long queues forming at intermediate stops.

Several widely felt public grievances against the local railway administration were aired at the enquiry. Evidence was given that many potential rail users had been given the impression that the line had already been closed and that this had been stated as an absolute fact by railway staff at Liverpool Street station (10*). The reliability of the stated financial loss made by the line was brought into question by several objectors. British Railways refused to give a breakdown of the figure of £34,000 which it said the line was losing annually. The national pro-rail pressure group, 'The Railway Invigoration Society', was so concerned at the absence of substantive information about the line's true financial position that it commissioned independent qualified consultants to prepare their own costings. Their report (11*) concluded that the true cost of operating the passenger service was a great deal lower than was claimed by British Railways and that actual loss was nearer £10,000 per annum.

Several representatives of local authorities alleged that British Railways had deliberately run-down services on the line to facilitate closure. Apart from the incidents of passengers being misinformed that the line had already been closed, factors cited to support this claim included; the almost complete lack of promotional publicity for the line, the replacement of a regular interval timetable by irregularly spaced trains, withdrawal of through trains to and from Ipswich, and the separation of the timetable from that for the main East Suffolk Line in which it had previously been fully integrated.

In December 1968 the Transport Users' Consultative Committee reported that some hardship would result if the line were to be closed (12*), although it considered that the hardship could be largely alleviated by some additions to the existing alternative bus service and some

extra facilities during the holiday season. After lengthy deliberation the Minister of Transport consented to the closure in May 1969, subject to the provision of five extra buses in each direction stopping only at the former railway stations on a limited-stop basis (13*,14*).The local authorities, principally Lowestoft Corporation, expressed concern at the proposed replacement service and reported to the Traffic Commissioners that it would not solve the hardship problems of displaced rail passengers. As a result of negotiations between the Corporation, the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company and the Traffic Commissioners, the difficulties were finally resolved in March 1970, enabling the railway line to be closed in May of that year. The procedures necessary before British Railways could put their closure proposal into effect thus covered a period of two and a half years (15*).

The lengthy process involved in the withdrawal of the railway passenger service between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth revealed some of the problems resulting from the conflicts of interest between the parties involved; British Railways local and national administration, national government, local authorities, local residents and rail users. Closure proceedings were commenced as a result of a national policy decision by British Railways towards the lesser-used branch-lines, following the advice of the Government sponsored 'Beeching Report'. Local railway management was faced with the task of implementing national policy decisions over which it had no control and was not consulted. The advice of local authorities was mostly ignored and most rail users felt that they were powerless.

As the closure process was progressing a new factor was beginning to find supporters from the ranks of railway preservationists, that is, the extent to which railway passenger services should be

recognised as a vital social service rather than a purely profit-making venture. The 1968 Transport Act took social considerations into account with regard to the value placed on public transport facilities and provided for national and local government subsidies to be made available for the maintenance of socially desirable services. Had the closure proposal for the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth railway line been delayed for a few months it might have been possible for the local authorities in the area to find some way of arranging for a subsidy to be provided, as East Suffolk County Council later did for several rural bus services operated by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company (16*).

Although much anomosity arose between British Railways and local authorities and members of the travelling public, over the closure of the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth railway line, the differences of opinion did not reach the extremes which occured in some other parts of England, where court orders were taken out to prevent services from being withdrawn or track removed.

In its report the Transport Users' Consultative Committee expressed the opinion that some hardship would be caused following the closure of the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth railway line. The level of demand for passenger services on the line during the final years of operation are now examined in detail to establish the extent of the extra load which the closure has imposed on alternative modes of transport.

References:

1. 'Eastern Region Passenger Services', British Railways Board, Summer 1961, Table 3.
2. Eastern Daily Press, 23/1/62.
3. 'Reshaping of British Railways', British Railways Board, 1963.
4. 'Eastern Region Passenger Services', British Railways Board, Summer 1963, Table 3.
5. 'Eastern Region Passenger Timetable 1966/67', British Railways Board.
6. 'Traffic Divisions of B.R. - 12 Norwich, part 1 (September 1968), part 2 (October 1968)', Report in Modern Railways. Review of the developments in the railway network of East Anglia since the 1963 Reshaping Report.
7. Eastern Evening News, 27/4/66.
8. 'Heads of Information, Passenger Services, Lowestoft to Yarmouth', British Railways Board, December 1967.
9. 'Heads of Information, Passenger Services, Ipswich to Lowestoft and Saxmundham to Aldeburgh', British Railways Board, July 1965.
10. Lowestoft Journal, 27/9/68. "Evidence was given that many people already thought the line was shut. It was claimed that hundreds of visitors had been told this at London stations."
11. 'Progress Report No. 77, December 1968', Railway Invigoration Society. "On the revenue side, both British Rail and the Ministry of Transport have refused to supply any figures concerning contributory revenue. The RIS believes that, if British Rail took into account contributory revenue, the line would be found to be operating at a profit."
12. Lowestoft Journal, 6/12/68.
13. Lowestoft Journal, 6/6/69.
14. P D Long, 'End of the Line', Buses, May 1970.

15. P D Long, 'Eastern Counties 416', The Omnibus Magazine, Vol. 31, No. 258, March 1970.

16. Lowestoft Journal, 13/11/70.

CHAPTER 7.

Public Demand For the Passenger Facilities Provided By the Lowestoft To Great Yarmouth Railway Line.

In connection with the 'Heads of Information' (1*) produced for the Transport Users' Consultative Committee enquiry into the proposal to close the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth railway line, British Railways undertook a number of passenger surveys during the period September 1967 to July 1968 and the results of the surveys were published in tabular form. Complete passenger surveys were conducted in the weeks ending 9th September 1967, 13th January 1968 and 28th July 1968. From these figures it has been possible to evaluate the fluctuations in passenger demand between summer and winter.

The use of conductor/guards on the line from late 1967 enabled the total number of tickets issued each week to be recorded. Figures produced by the National Union of Railwaymen representative at the public enquiry, together with aggregate totals from the 'Heads of Information' tables are reproduced as table 7. 1. The considerable seasonal variation in passenger demand is obvious. Although the number of trains provided each weekday was similar throughout the year, usage during the months October to May was less than one-third of that for the August peak weeks. The peaking in August indicates that the majority of the line's users were not regular rail travellers but seasonal recreational users or holidaymakers. The extent of regular daily journeys was probably approximately 300 per day, 1,500 per week, on the assumption that a large proportion of the lowest winter weekly total was composed of regular users. If each regular user made one return journey each day then there would have been about 150 regular daily users of the rail service.

Table 7. 1 Passenger Figures for Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth Railway Line.

Date (Week ending)	Total	Source
9/9/67	6376	'Heads'
4/11/67	2611	"
13/1/68	2012	"
4/5/68	1804	N.U.R.
11/5/68	1897	"
18/5/68	1975	"
25/5/68	2013	"
1/6/68	2376	"
8/6/68	4766	"
15/6/68	3666	"
22/6/68	3976	"
29/6/68	3578	"
6/7/68	3256	"
13/7/68	3708	"
20/7/68	4092	"
27/7/68	4233	"
3/8/68	7018	"
10/8/68	7720	"
17/8/68	6773	"
25/8/68	5989	"
14/9/68	2793	"
21/9/68	3603	"

Sources: 'Heads': 'Heads of Information' (1*)

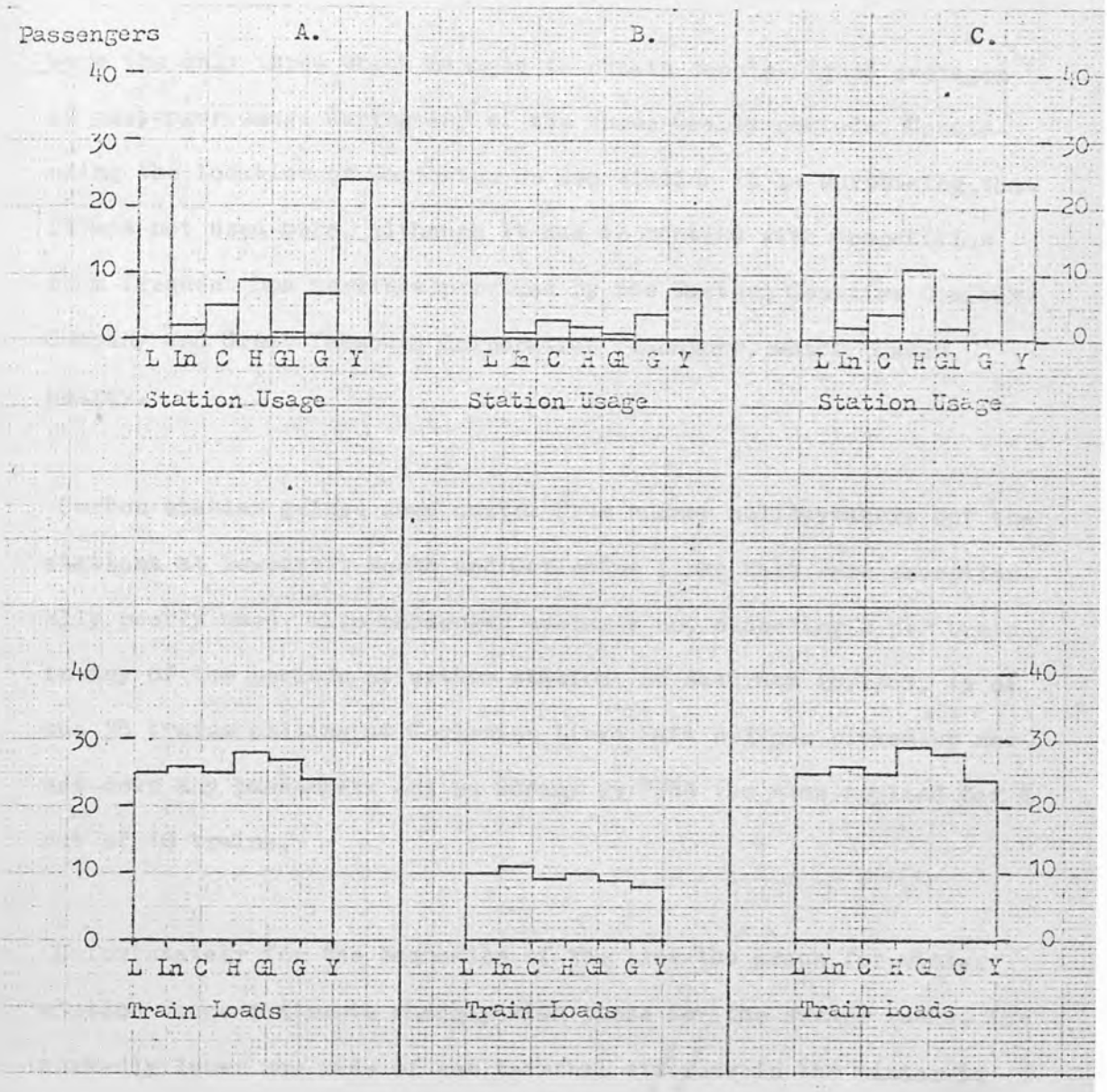
N.U.R.: National Union of Railwaymen.

The usage of the seven stations served by the line, relative to each other, is shown on the graphs based on the information contained in the 'Heads of Information' tables (fig 7.1 A,B,C).The upper graph in each pair shows total station usage, that is the average numbers of persons joining and alighting from each train at each station during the course of each day for the three weekly periods. The lower set of graphs show the average numbers of passengers travelling on each train between stations during the same periods.

The station usage graphs show the dominant position of the two terminal stations. During the two summer weeks Lowestoft and Yarmouth main stations had averages of 25 and 24 persons joining and alighting per train, whereas the combined totals for the five intermediate stations were only 24 and 27 persons per train. The average figures for the terminal stations conceal very wide variations from train to train. For example, on Saturday 28/7/68 a total of 114 persons alighted from the 10.50 hrs. arrival at Yarmouth, whereas the 06.40 hrs. arrival on the same day delivered only three persons.

In the two summer weeks the third station in terms of usage was that at Hopton, and the station at Gorleston on Sea was fourth, however in the winter the order was reversed, a reflection of the fact that Hopton station was more dependent on revenue from holidaymakers than Gorleston. The seasonal nature of Hopton's traffic is evident from the fact that 41 and 45 persons joined the 10.00 hrs. Lowestoft to Yarmouth and 10.29 hrs. Yarmouth to Lowestoft trains respectively on Saturday 28/7/68, popular trains with holidaymakers returning home from the several holiday-camps in the village. The station provided 1 and 0 passengers to the equivalent trains on Saturday 13/1/68.

The stations at Lowestoft Central, Yarmouth South Town and Hopton



Key to Stations: Figs. 7.1 A-C.

L Lowestoft Central
Ln Lowestoft North
C Corton
H Hopton on Sea
Gl Gorleston Links Halt
G Gorleston on Sea
Y Yarmouth South Town.

Figs. 7.1 A-C . Record of Station Usage and Loads on Trains on Lowestoft (Central) to Great Yarmouth (South Town) Railway Line. Daily Averages.

Fig. 7.1A. Week Ending 10th September 1967.
Fig. 7.1B. Week Ending 13th January 1968.
Fig. 7.1C. Week Ending 28th July 1968.

were the only three which managed to obtain double-figure averages of passenger usage during any of the three weekly periods. Considering the location of Gorleston on Sea station it is surprising that it was not used more, although it had to contend with competition from frequent bus services provided by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company and Great Yarmouth Corporation Transport, which passed nearby.

Corton station gained some custom from summer holidaymakers but the stations at Lowestoft North and Gorleston Links Halt were exceptionally poorly used, with passenger averages not exceeding 2 per train in any of the periods at either station. On Saturday 28/7/68, 15 of the 28 trains calling at Gorleston Links Halt neither picked-up nor set-down any passengers and on Sunday 29/7/68 the same applied for 6 out of 10 trains.

Unfortunately for the economics of the line the graph for winter station usage contrasts sharply with those for the summer weeks. The markedly lower use made of the terminal stations in the winter is most obvious, especially for Yarmouth South Town station.

The graphs showing the average numbers of passengers travelling on trains between each station cover the same three census weeks. The standard train used on the line after the service reductions of 1967 (see page 48) was a twin-unit diesel rail-car, with seats for approximately 120 persons and a small luggage compartment. The graphs show that, on average, there was a substantial amount of spare passenger capacity on trains. During the summer weeks 75% of seat capacity was vacant on average and during the winter week 90% was vacant. During the winter week trains averaged between only 8 and 11 passengers over the length of the line. The section of line with the

highest passenger loadings during the summer weeks was between Hopton and Gorleston Links stations. The slight peak over the central section of the line is probably a reflection of the overlap or passengers moving between intermedate stations and the terminals.

The highest individual load recorded during either of the two summer weeks was 117 persons between Gorleston Links and Gorleston on Sea on the 10.29 hrs. train ex Lowestoft on Saturday 28/7/68, closely followed by 113 persons on the 14.20 hrs. ex Lowestoft between Lowestoft North and Corton stations on Saturday 9/9/67. However, during the same weeks early morning and late evening trains rarely had loads exceeding single figures.

Thus, the overall picture of passenger usage of the Lowestoft to Yarmouth passenger service in the summers of 1967 and 1968 was of moderately well loaded morning and afternoon trains, whereas most early and late trains were very lightly loaded and probably did not cover even running costs. Unfortunately a policy of withdrawing the uneconomic trains whilst retaining those for which income was adequate to cover running costs was impractical for several reasons, namely; a diesel unit and its crew would be under-utilized and the crew would have to receive wages for unproductive time; some of the passengers travelling in one direction on peak period trains would have made their balancing journeys on lesser used trains, the withdrawal of which would have lost their custom altogether; allocation of fixed track maintenance costs and other central overheads would have fallen on the revenue from fewer trains, especially as the line carried no freight traffic by this time. Therefore the local railway management seems to have decided that any further thinning of traffic would not produce any economic advantages and the best course of

action would be to close the line altogether.

Although some summer trains were fairly well used, winter usage was very low. During the winter census week average loadings did not exceed 11 persons per train at any point along the line and there was also little evidence of any peak periods of demand. The highest load recorded during the January week was only 30 persons, on the 08.32 hrs. departure from Lowestoft Central.

So, the winter level of patronage on the line was only about 30% of that for the summer months, whereas the number of trains provided was only one less in each direction on weekdays and two less in each direction on Saturdays. Both British Railways and the Transport Users' Consultative Committee agreed that some hardship would result in the summer months if the train service were to be withdrawn, due to overloading of the parallel Eastern Counties Omnibus Company services at peak periods, but British Railways was unable to agree to the maintenance of the line for the provision of a limited passenger service for three months each year, over a line which carried no freight traffic.

Introduction of the Replacement Bus Service.

The replacement bus service was stipulated by the Minister of Transport to help meet the needs of some of the regular year-round rail users who would be inconvenienced by the withdrawal of the railway service. However Lowestoft Corporation strongly expressed the opinion that it would fail in its objectives because it was not co-ordinated with existing bus services in the area (2*). After some argument a revised service was agreed. Instead of the five limited-stop journeys in each direction stipulated by the Minister, calling

only at former railway stations and terminating in Great Yarmouth at South Town station, three extra journeys in each direction were added to the existing stage service between the two towns, but with a short diversion through Corton village. The additions seem to have managed to absorb the residual public transport needs in the winter months but have done little to overcome the severe summer congestion, felt even before the railway service was withdrawn. From the summer of 1972 some of the existing bus journeys were diverted from the A12 trunk road to serve Hopton village. The alteration was not connected with the rail closure but was the result of the completion of long-term plans to improve the formerly narrow and winding coast road between Corton and Hopton.

Thus, by the autumn of 1972, slightly more than two years after the rail closure, the bus service between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth was not greatly altered from that which was in operation immediately prior to the closure and former railway users seem to have adapted to the changed conditions although from time to time there have been complaints from Corton residents that the bus service is less reliable and more inconvenient than the trains.

Further details of recent changes in the bus service provided by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company in the Lowestoft area are included in Chapter 16.

References:

1. 'Heads of Information, Passenger Services, Lowestoft to Yarmouth', British Railways Board, December 1967. plus supplements January and August 1968.

2. P D Long, 'Eastern Counties 416', The Omnibus Magazine, Vol.31, No.258, March 1970. Brief summary of the difficulties involved in the introduction of the rail replacement bus service.

CHAPTER 8.

Public Demand For the Passenger Facilities Provided by the East Suffolk Railway Line Between Ipswich and Lowestoft.

It has been possible to tabulate and evaluate much of the statistical information contained in the 'Heads of Information' report for the East Suffolk Line (1*) and to reproduce this information in graphical form. Graphs have been drawn up on a similar basis to those for the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth Line (Chapter 7) and show passenger usage of each station and section of line (figs 8.1 to 8.2).

The principal 'Heads' booklet for the East Suffolk Line gives details of passenger movements during the week ending October 10th, 1964 and a later supplement covers a period of four consecutive weeks in July and August 1965. Although the August 1965 graph of station usage includes passengers using the seasonal Saturday through trains between London Liverpool Street and Yarmouth South Town in addition to those using the regular local service between Ipswich, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, it nevertheless shows clearly the dominance of the two terminal stations in generating passenger movements. The same is also true in respect of the October 1964 graph of station usage although the terminals do not stand out quite as clearly as in the summer graph. The intermediate stations may be divided into two distinct groups; Beccles, Saxmundham, Oulton Broad South, Halesworth and Woodbridge stations each had a moderate level of usage, whilst the remaining stations, at Wickham Market, Darsham, Brampton and Westerfield were very poorly patronised. For both of the census periods use of Westerfield station averaged only a fraction of one passenger per train stop.

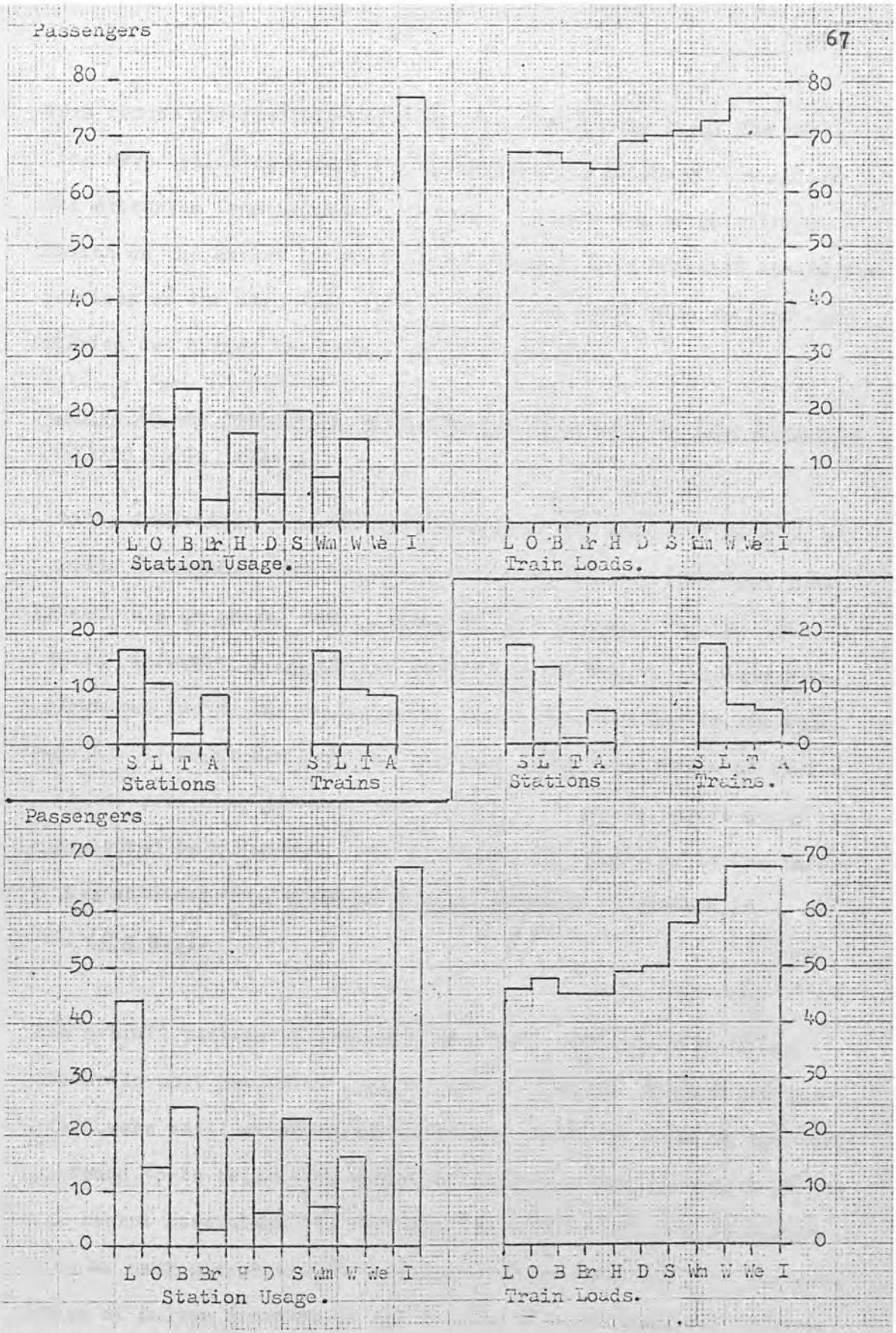
Although the two terminal stations seem to have been affected by a seasonal fluctuation in usage the intermediate stations do not seem

to have been as greatly affected.

The graphs of passenger loads on trains between stations provide a useful comparison with those for station usage. Again there are differences between the graphs for the two census periods, the most noticeable of which is the lower off-season patronage of the section of line north of Saxmundham. For each period the highest loadings were recorded on the section of line between Ipswich and Woodbridge and the lowest loadings between Beccles and Halesworth. Although graphs for both periods show slight peaks between Beccles and Lowestoft, there is nevertheless a clear steady decrease in passenger loadings northwards from Ipswich, especially for the October recordings.

The standard passenger train on the East Suffolk Line in 1965 was the twin-unit diesel rail-car with seats for approximately 120 passengers. However, during a short period in the summer trains were often lengthened and locomotive hauled trains were sometimes substituted. In addition, the year round through trains to and from London and the summer Saturday through trains all consisted of locomotive hauled main-line stock, with refreshment facilities in a few cases. Taking the two-car diesel multiple unit as the smallest viable passenger train, then the average train loading in the summer of 1965 was between 53% and 64% of capacity, although these figures conceal the fact that a few trains carried well over the capacity of a two-car unit for at least part of their journeys.

The statistics contained in the 'Heads of Information' tables show that the passenger service on the East Suffolk Line was moderately well used in 1964 and 1965, particularly the section between Ipswich and Saxmundham. The terminal stations were well used but some of the



For Key to stations see Fig. 8.4

Record of Station Usage and Loads on Trains on East Suffolk Railway Line and Saxmundham to Aldeburgh Branch. Daily Averages.

Fig.8.1 (top) Four weeks ending 7th August 1965.

Fig.8.2 (bottom) Week ending 10th October 1964.

more remote intermediate stations were very poorly used. The statistics were collected before the closure of the Aldeburgh branch and the extension from Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth and to gain information on the extent to which these closures have affected demand for services on the main East Suffolk Line some field observations were carried out during the course of 1971 and 1972.

Changes in the Pattern of Demand For the East Suffolk Line Passenger Services Since 1965.

Thirty individual journeys were made over the East Suffolk Line at periods throughout 1971 and the statistics obtained have been presented in a graphical form similar to that employed for the 1965 'Heads' information (fig 8.3). Fifteen of the thirty journeys were undertaken during the course of an intensive study on the six weekdays 6 - 11 September 1971 and covering a wider selection of trains than the remaining journeys. The findings of the intensive study are represented by a separate pair of graphs (fig 8.4), as is the information obtained from thirteen further journeys undertaken in 1972 (fig 8.5).

The overall picture of passenger movements found in 1971/72 was similar in most respects to that found in 1964/65. Ipswich and Lowestoft were still outstandingly dominant stations, although Ipswich was found to be relatively much more important than Lowestoft in the more recent recordings. In 1971 Ipswich station was used by almost twice as many passengers as used Lowestoft Central station. The patronage of Oulton Broad South and Beccles stations appeared to have declined in comparison with the other intermediate stations, and the graphs of train loadings show a much steeper decline northwards along the line than seven years earlier. The northerly decline did not level out around Beccles in the more recent recordings, but continued,

and the lowest passenger levels were recorded between Oulton Broad South and Lowestoft Central stations.

The September 1971 recordings were taken towards the end of the summer peak period and the decline in patronage of Oulton Broad South and Beccles stations, compared with 1964/65, suggests that the closure of the line between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth in 1970 has had a detrimental effect on the East Suffolk Line, with former railway passengers to and from Great Yarmouth possibly using buses throughout or not travelling at all, rather than choosing to make a change from rail to bus or vice versa at Lowestoft Central station. This view is supported by local railway staff, including one conductor/guard who put most of the blame for the decline in usage of the northern section of the East Suffolk Line on the sudden termination of passengers taking days out at Gorleston and Great Yarmouth, following the closure of the coast line. Further examination of contributory revenue between the East Suffolk Line and the Great Yarmouth line is included in Chapter 11.

The graphs for journeys undertaken over the East Suffolk Line in 1972 show rather different results from those for the 1971 journeys, but this is probably the result of an unrepresentative sample of trains rather than of a radical change in passenger demand characteristics. The 16.50 hrs. London Liverpool Street - Lowestoft and 07.18 hrs. Lowestoft - Liverpool Street were sampled on several occasions in both 1971 and 1972 but accurate recording of passenger movements on these trains was impossible, due to the length of the trains at nine or ten carriages and the large numbers of passengers joining and alighting at some stations, especially Saxmundham. On one occasion (Friday 15th. October 1971) the 18.09 hrs. Ipswich to Lowestoft

(16.50 hrs. departure from Liverpool Street) had 214 passengers on board on departure from Ipswich, and on termination at Lowestoft 44 passengers alighted.

The table below (table 8.1) shows how demand for passenger facilities at stations on the East Suffolk Line has changed in relation to the total usage of the line.

Table 8.1 Changes in the Relative Importance of Individual Stations On the East Suffolk Line. (Percentage of Total Passenger Movements).

Notes	Station	WE 10/10/64 %	WE 7/8/65 %	30 Journeys 1971 %	13 Journeys 1972 %
1.	Lowestoft	19·5	26·4	18·6	25·6
	Oulton Broad S.	6·2	7·1	4·4	4·9
	Beccles	11·1	9·4	8·4	7·9
	Brampton	1·3	1·6	0·9	1·8
	Halesworth	8·8	6·3	8·0	7·9
	Darsham	2·7	2·0	3·1	3·0
2.	Saxmundham	10·2	7·9	9·3	7·3
	Wm. Market	3·1	3·1	2·7	1·8
	Woodbridge	7·1	5·9	8·0	6·7
3.	Westerfield	0·0	0·0	0·4	0·6
3.4.	Ipswich	30·1	30·3	36·3	32·3
	TOTAL %	100·1	100·0	100·1	99·8

Notes:
1. Includes through passengers to and from Yarmouth line in 1964/65.
2. Includes through passengers to and from Aldeburgh line in 1964/65.
3. Does not include passengers on trains to or from Felixstowe branch.
4. Includes through passengers travelling beyond Ipswich.

The table shows that, although variable, the percentages using the two terminal stations were well above those for any of the intermediate stations during all periods. The twofold division of the

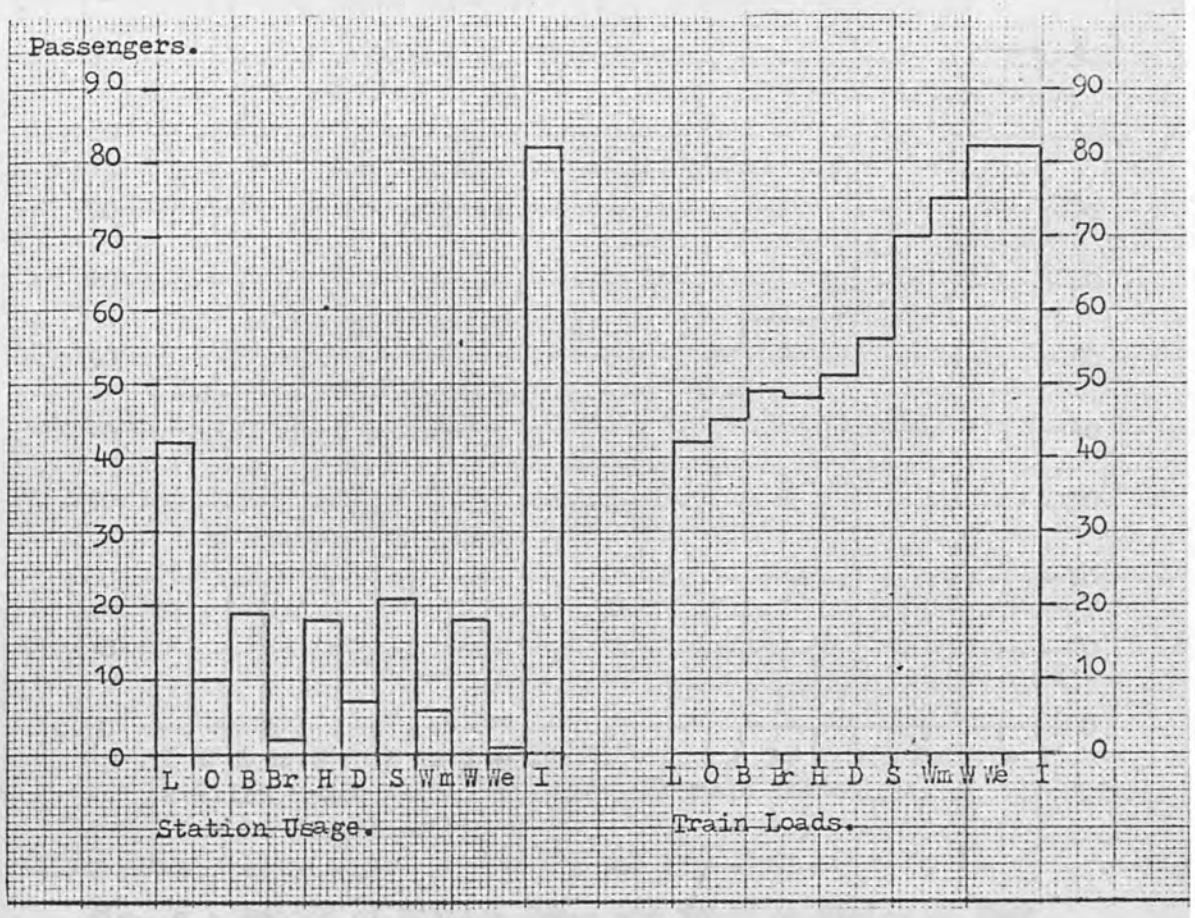


Fig. 8.3 Record of Station Usage and Loads on Trains on East Suffolk Railway Line. Averages of Thirty Sample Journeys 1971.

(For Key to Stations See Fig. 8.4)

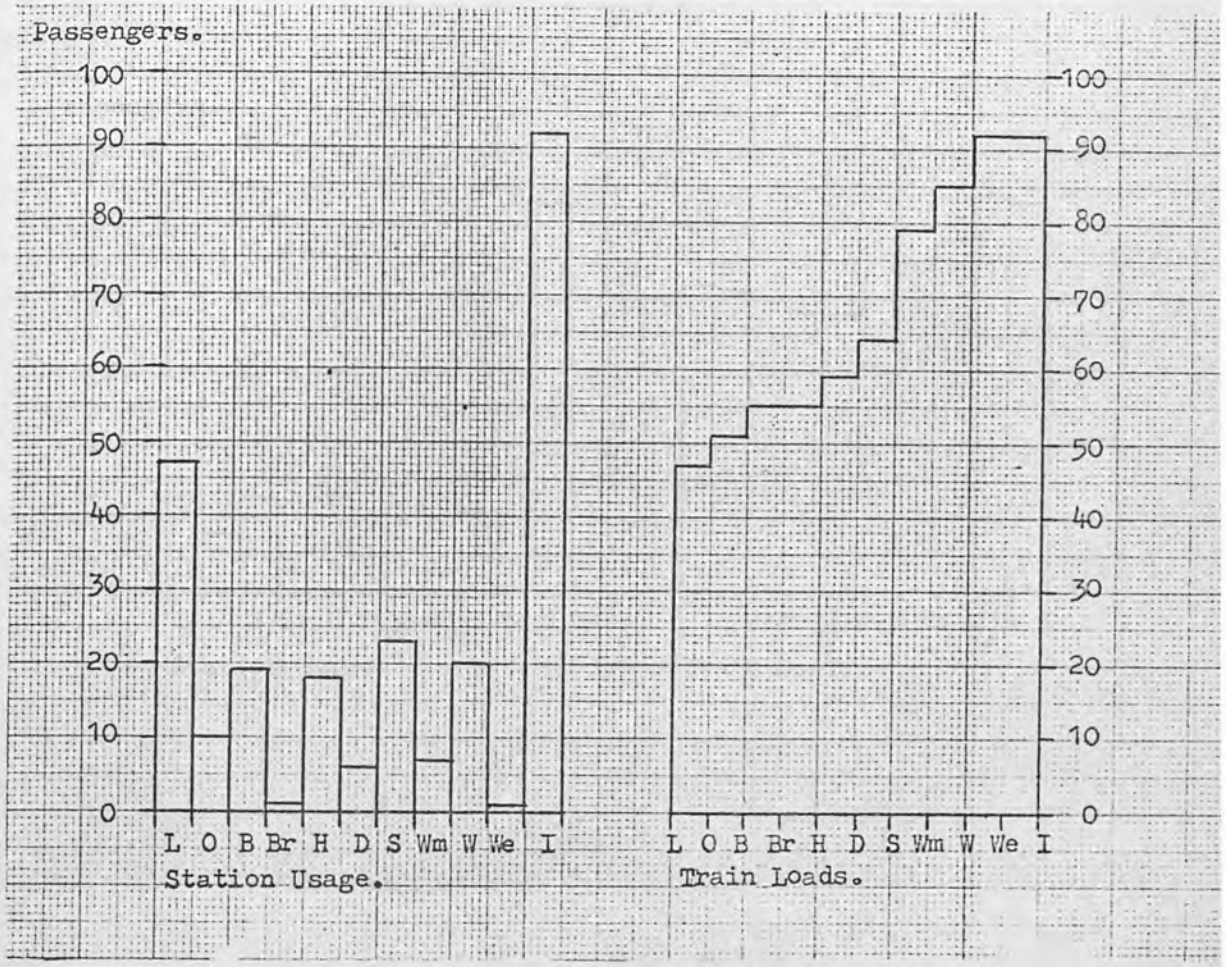


Fig. 8.4 Record of Station Usage and Loads on Trains on East Suffolk Railway Line. Averages of Fifteen Sample Journeys September 1971. (See Also Fig. 8.3).

Key to Station Names for Figs. 8.1 to 8.5 .

L Lowestoft Central
O Oulton Broad South
B Beccles
Br Brampton
H Halesworth
D Darsham
S Saxmundham
Wm Wickham Market
W Woodbridge
We Westerfield
I Ipswich.

Fig. 8.5 Record of Station Usage and Loads on Trains on East Suffolk Railway Line. Averages of Thirteen Sample Journeys 1972.

(For Key to Stations See Fig. 8.4)

intermediate stations also remained fairly constant.

Conclusions.

The principal trends in passenger demand over the period 1964 to 1972 seem to have been that usage of most of the stations on the northern section of the line beyond Halesworth has declined, whilst demand southwards from Saxmundham has remained stable.

Given that most of the traffic lost since 1965 has been of a summer seasonal nature, as reflected by the fact that the major changes in the timetable over the period have involved the removal of summer Saturday through trains to and from London, then it seems that much of the local demand which led to the 1964 closure proposal being rejected by the Minister of Transport still exists today.

However, the problem remains that, under British Railways accounting procedures, the East Suffolk Line makes a substantial loss each year, about 50p for every passenger carried. During the late 1960s there were a number of statements from British Railways sources that severe economies would have to be made to prevent another closure proposal from being put forward. One plan put forward in 1966 but not proceeded with was for all Sunday trains to be withdrawn north of Saxmundham (2*). In 1969 an open warning was given that unless the costs of running the line, already reduced to basic railway status, could be substantially reduced it might have to be closed (3*).

Since 1969 the East Suffolk Line has been receiving Government grant-aid to maintain the passenger service for the 1000 people stated to use the line each day during the winter months and 1400 each day in summer (4*,5*). The problems involved in the policy of providing grant-aid to unremunerative railway passenger services are examined

in detail in Chapter 10.

References.

1. 'Heads of Information', Passenger Services, Ipswich to Lowestoft and Saxmundham to Aldeburgh', British Railways Board, July 1965.
2. East Anglian Daily Times, 23/5/66. "British Railways is proposing to cut out all through trains on the East Suffolk Line on Sundays. Instead there will be four trains in the afternoon and evening only on the Saxmundham to Ipswich section and a feeder bus service from Halesworth to Saxmundham."
3. Lowestoft Journal, 17/10/69, "Unless ways and means can be found of reducing the overall running costs of the East Suffolk Line the Minister might consider the cost excessive in relation to the social value - which would result in the train service being withdrawn."
4. Lowestoft Journal, 13/10/72. Daily usage put at 850 in winter and 1100 in summer, according to a British Railways spokesman.
5. Suffolk Mercury, /4/71. "Mr R M Senter, passenger commercial officer for British Rail, Norwich, said there had been a marginal increase in people travelling on the (East Suffolk) line. The figure was about 1400 a day in summer and 1000 in winter."

CHAPTER 9.

Recent Changes in Passenger Services on Other Railway Lines In East Suffolk.

None of the railway lines situated wholly or partly in East Suffolk not yet examined in detail in this study, that is; Ipswich (Westerfield Junction) to Felixstowe, part of the London Liverpool Street to Norwich via Ipswich line, part of the Ipswich to Cambridge line and part of the Lowestoft to Norwich line (fig 9.2), has yet been threatened with complete closure, although they have all experienced changes in the pattern of services offered since the publication of the Reshaping Report in 1963.

(London) - Manningtree - Ipswich - Diss - (Norwich) Line.

The passenger service between Liverpool Street and Norwich via Ipswich was one of the few in East Anglia which British Railways has considered to be suitable for long-term development on an 'Inter-City' basis (1*,2*) and recent developments on the line have followed this policy, including the introduction of improved signalling, long-welded track and faster express times. However, another aspect of the development of the line has not been so well received by the local population. Following the pattern set by many of the other main-lines radiating from London, British Railways expressed the intention to withdraw all facilities from most of the intermediate stations serving small towns and villages.

The summer 1961 passenger timetable showed that passenger trains stopped at 11 intermediate stations between Ipswich and Norwich, of which those at Flordon, Forncett, Tivetshall, Burston and Diss, were in Norfolk, and those at Mellis, Finningham, Haughley, Stowmarket, Needham Market and Claydon in East Suffolk. Only Stowmarket and Diss stations were served by the express trains between Norwich and London,

the remainder being served by a local service between Ipswich and Norwich and in part by the local service between Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds.

The financial viability of the Ipswich to Norwich line has never been in doubt and by the mid 1960s the route between Norwich and London was the third largest revenue earner on the Eastern Region of British Railways. Revenue on the line increased by 10% per annum between 1964 and 1968 and passenger journeys by 6·2% per annum. Express passenger services and stopping services were examined separately by the economists who prepared the 1963 Reshaping Report. Their approach was along the lines suggested by E R Williams as early as 1956 (3*), who thought that up-to-date costing techniques had revealed that local services were generally unremunerative, and furthermore that:

"The way is now open... to concentrate on the long-distance services for which (railways) are well suited - and withdraw from the field of local stopping services, in which the opposite is the case".

A similar view is expressed in the Reshaping Report (4*):

"(Stopping services) operating over more densely loaded routes (are) in most cases just as unsound financially as those operating over branch lines".

The local service between Ipswich and Norwich was one of the first in Britain to be operated by diesel rail-car sets, which were introduced in September 1954 (5*),and the service remained basically unchanged until the early 1960s, except for the closure of the very poorly used station at Bramford, 2½ miles north of Ipswich, in 1955. The summer 1961 weekday service on the line consisted of 25 trains each way between Ipswich and Norwich and 17 trains each way between Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds or beyond via Haughley Junction. The relative importance of each station may be seen on the graph (fig 9.1), which shows the

numbers of trains stopping at each of the stations between Ipswich and Diss, and also at Elmswell and Thurston stations on the Bury line within East Suffolk and at Bentley station between Ipswich and Manningtree to the south.

In accord with British Railways policy, a closure proposal for all intermediate stations between Ipswich and Norwich, except for the larger stations at Stowmarket and Diss, was announced in 1965. The proposal engendered much local opposition, largely based on the argument that much hardship would be caused to the inhabitants of the villages whose stations would be closed, because the existing bus services in the area were inadequate and the provision of a reasonable rail-replacement bus service would be impossible. However, although the Minister of Transport agreed that some hardship would result, the closures were allowed to proceed. The replacement bus service consisted of five through journeys each way between Stowmarket and Norwich and three return workings to supplement the section between Norwich and Diss. The service, with operation shared by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company, Cullings Coaches of Norwich and R O Simonds Ltd. of Botesdale near Diss, commenced on a limited-stop basis, with buses taking two hours for the complete journey between Stowmarket and Norwich - double the time taken by the railway service it replaced. The existing bus service between Stowmarket and Ipswich was considered to be sufficient to meet demand displaced from Needham Market station.

The passenger facilities at the stations at Needham Market, Haughley, Finningham, Mellis and the similar stations in Norfolk, were withdrawn from 7th November 1966 and the replacement bus service commenced at once (Claydon station had closed from 17th June 1963). The resulting reduction in rail facilities on the line may be seen by comparing

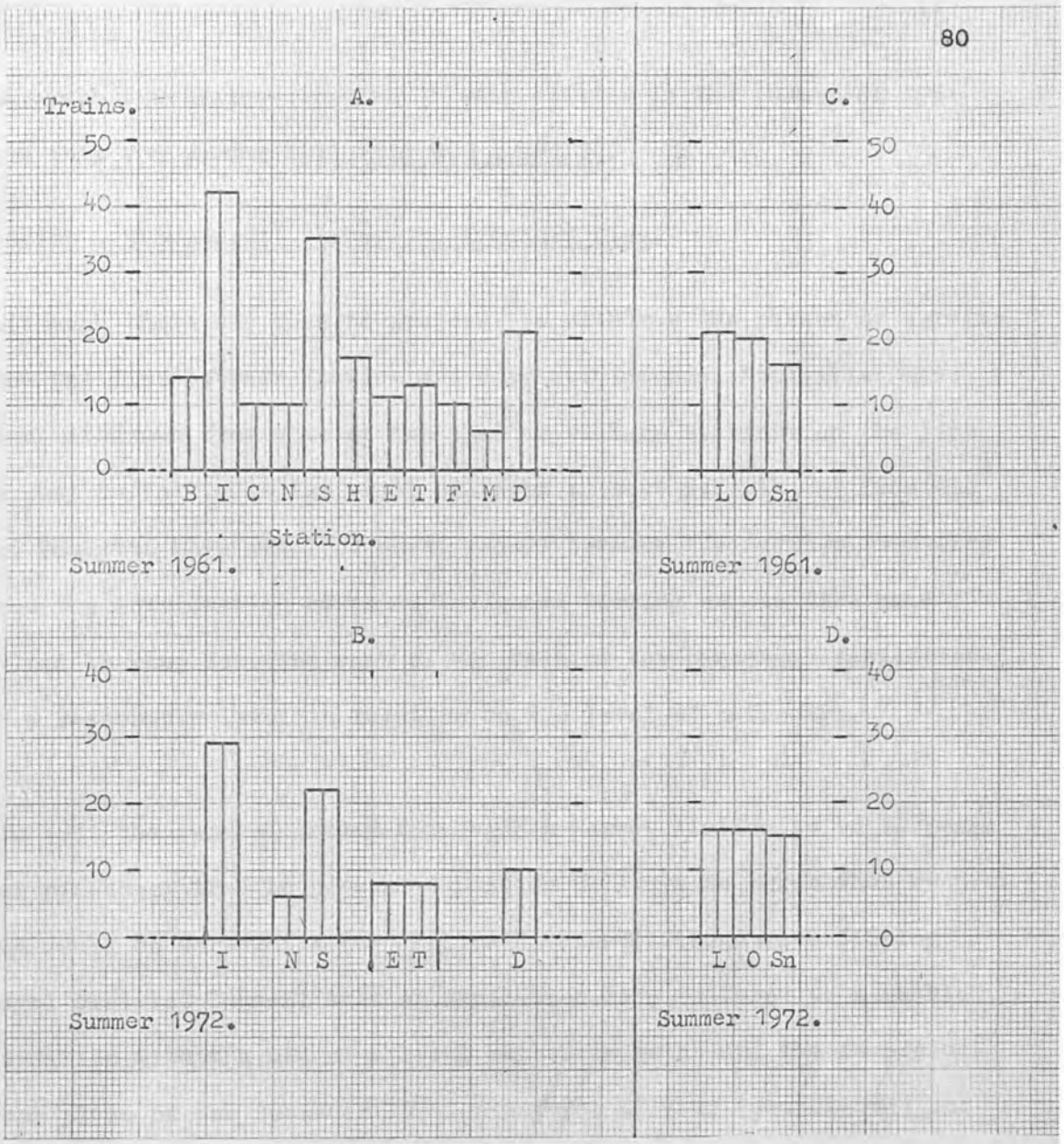


Fig.9.1 A and B. Numbers of Down (Northbound) Passenger Trains Timetabled to Stop at Stations in East Suffolk on Colchester - Ipswich - Norwich Line. Summer 1961 (A), Summer 1972 (B). (Includes Part of Bury-St.-Edmunds Branch).

Fig.9.1 C and D. Numbers of Westbound Passenger Trains Timetabled to Stop at Stations in East Suffolk on Lowestoft - Norwich Line. Summer 1961 (C), Summer 1972 (D).

Sources: British Railways Timetables, Summer 1961 and Summer 1972.

KEY TO STATIONS:

Ipswich - Norwich Line:	Bury Branch:	Lowestoft - Norwich Line:
B Bentley	E Elmswell	L Lowestoft Central
I Ipswich	T Thurston	O Oulton Broad South
C Claydon		Sn Somerleyton
N Needham Market		
S Stowmarket		
H Haughley		
F Finningham		
M Mellis		
D Diss		

the graph for trains stopping at each station in the summer of 1961 with that for summer 1971 (fig 9.2 A and B).

Ipswich - Stowmarket - (Bury St. Edmunds) Line.

Although there has been no proposal to withdraw the passenger service from the line between Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds, facilities have been withdrawn from some of the smaller village stations on the line in West Suffolk. The two small stations in East Suffolk, at Elmswell and Thurston have remained open, mainly because the savings resulting from the introduction of conductor/guard working on the line have helped to keep down the cost of maintaining the passenger facilities to a reasonable level in relation to the level of patronage.

In 1971 the renewed demand for Needham Market station to be reopened for passenger traffic persuaded British Railways to agree that reopening would be worthwhile (6*). Following consultations with Gipping Rural District Council station facilities were restored to a usable condition with the aid of a local authority grant and the reopening took place on 6th December 1971. A service of 7 up (southbound) and 3 down (northbound) trains was introduced, all trains being on the Ipswich - Bury St. Edmunds - Cambridge local service (7*,8*).

Lowestoft - Somerleyton - (Norwich) Line.

The line between Lowestoft and Norwich was the only one serving the port not to be proposed for closure in the Reshaping Report. Instead it was chosen for the concentration of freight and passenger traffic to and from the town, some of which was to be diverted from the East Suffolk Line. Despite the failure of the East Suffolk Line closure proposal, all freight traffic has now been diverted to the Norwich line. For a time in the late 1960s attempts were also made to persuade

RAILWAY PASSENGER SERVICE FREQUENCIES AND STATIONS OPEN IN EAST SUFFOLK AND ADJACENT AREAS. AUGUSTS 1961 AND 1971.

FIG 9.2A

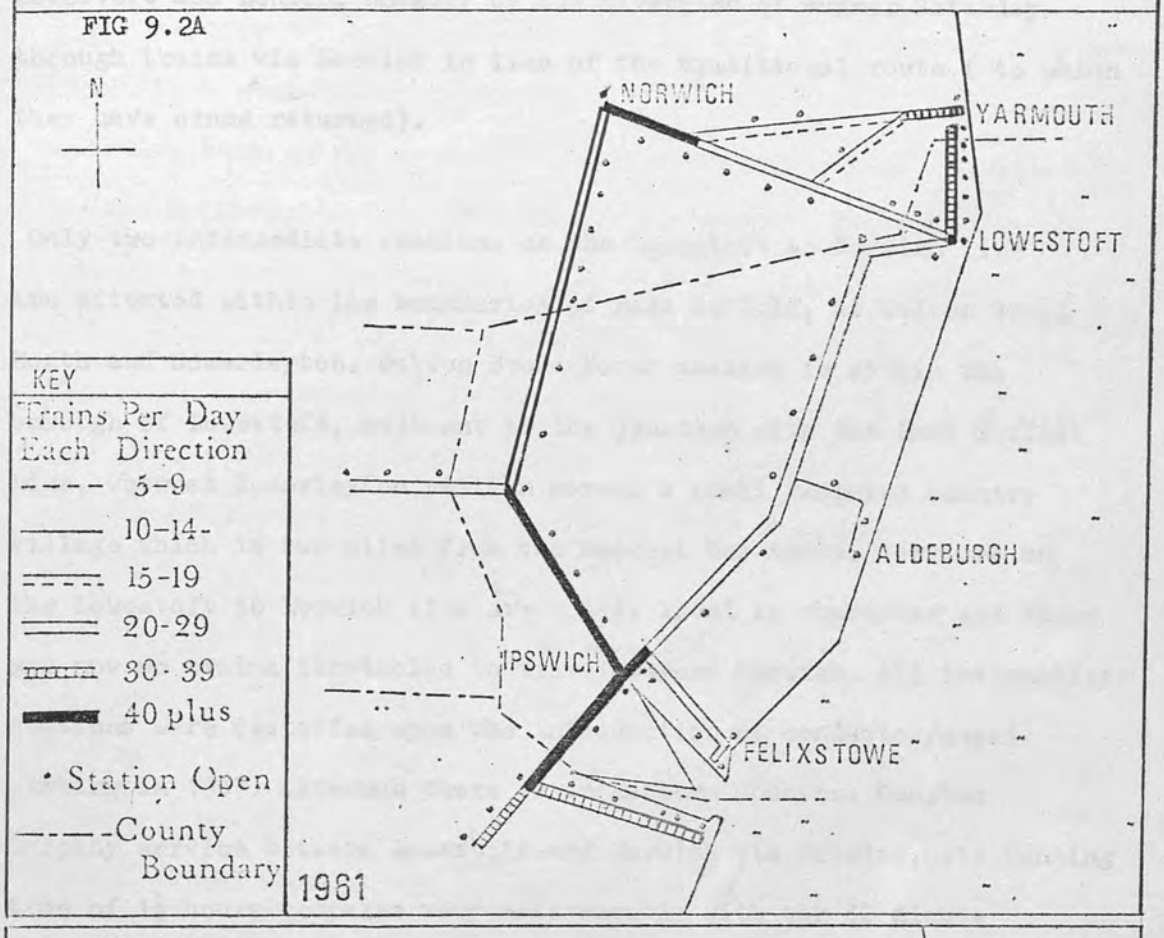
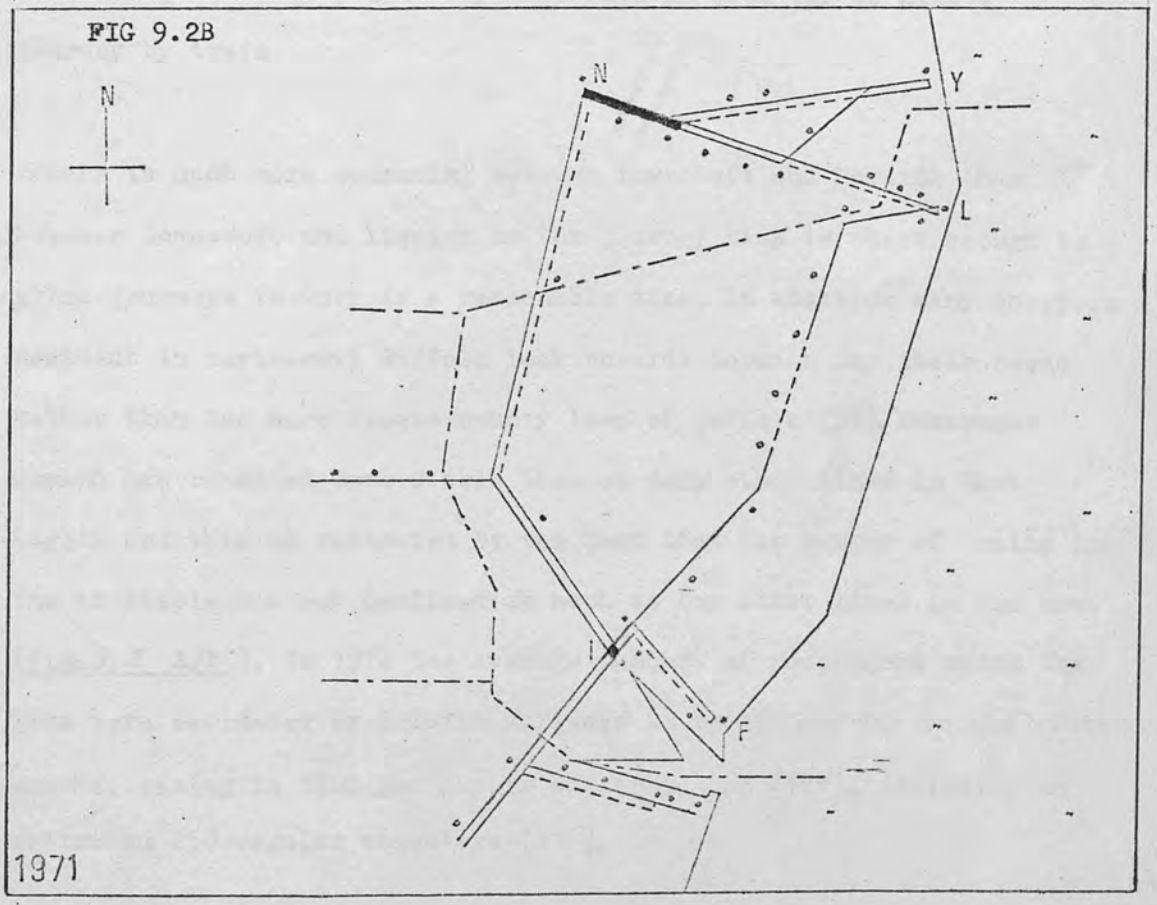


FIG 9.2B



passengers to take the longer and more expensive route between Lowestoft and London, notably by the diversion of summer Saturday through trains via Norwich in lieu of the traditional route (to which they have since returned).

Only two intermediate stations on the Lowestoft to Norwich line are situated within the boundaries of East Suffolk, at Oulton Broad North and Somerleyton. Oulton Broad North station is within the borough of Lowestoft, adjacent to the junction with the East Suffolk Line, whereas Somerleyton station serves a small isolated country village which is two miles from the nearest bus route. Services on the Lowestoft to Norwich line are mostly local in character and there are now no trains timetabled to travel beyond Norwich. All intermediate stations were destaffed upon the introduction of conductor/guard working in 1967. Although there is an Eastern Counties Omnibus Company service between Lowestoft and Norwich via Beccles, its running time of 1½ hours compares very unfavourably with the 40 minute journey by train.

There is much more commuting between Lowestoft and Norwich than between Lowestoft and Ipswich as the journey time is short enough to allow journeys to work in a reasonable time. In addition many shoppers resident in north-east Suffolk look towards Norwich for their needs rather than the more remote county town of Suffolk (9*). Passenger demand has remained more stable than on many other lines in East Anglia and this is reflected by the fact that the number of trains in the timetable has not declined as much as for other lines in the area (figs 9.2 A/B). In 1972 the average numbers of passengers using the line were estimated by British Railways to be 800 per day in the winter months, rising to 1000 per day in summer months (10*), including an estimated 250 regular commuters (11*).

Ipswich - Felixstowe Line.

The passenger service provided on the Ipswich to Felixstowe line has always been predominantly 'branch-line' in character, with the majority of trains terminating at Ipswich. Of the 21 trains timetabled to run in each direction during summer weekdays in 1961, only one ran beyond Ipswich, as far as Colchester. 15 of the 21 trains were extended in Felixstowe by means of a reversal, from Felixstowe Town station to Felixstowe Beach station, which was situated only a few hundred yards from the sea and which was open only in the summer months. Sunday services in the summer of 1961 were almost as frequent as on weekdays, with 20 trains in each direction, indicating that day-trippers formed a high proportion of the summer traffic on the line.

The Felixstowe branch was not mentioned in the Reshaping Report and it seems that its finances were not causing any concern at that time. A report on the line carried in 'Modern Railways' of December 1964 (12*) stated that the future of the passenger service seemed to be secure. The report noted that the summer passenger season did not suffer from extreme peaking on Saturdays because of the predominance of day-trippers rather than long-stay holidaymakers. It also noted that the hourly winter service could be operated very economically by one diesel multiple-unit railcar set, making the return trip between Ipswich and Felixstowe in an hour with five minute turn-round periods at each end of the line. The conclusion reached by the report was that the line was "near the ideal of a viable branch line, with stations convenient to the areas they serve". However, four years later the situation appeared rather less hopeful, when an article in the same magazine (13*) reported that "(the line) has suffered considerably in recent years from more direct bus services and is no longer considered a viable proposition". After the 1967 summer season Felixstowe Beach

station was closed and all other stations on the line were destaffed.

By the summer of 1971 the passenger service between Ipswich and Felixstowe had been reduced to 14 trains each way on weekdays, 15 on Saturdays and 10 on Sundays, with no Sunday service in the winter months. So, over the ten year period 1961 - 1971 there had been reductions of 33%, 17% and 50% in summer weekday, Saturday and Sunday frequencies respectively. The marked reduction in Sunday services was consistent with similar reductions undertaken throughout East Anglia in the late 1960s in an attempt to reduce wage costs.

Several sample journeys were made over the Felixstowe branch during the weeks ending 29th May 1971 and 11th September 1971. The results of these journeys are reproduced in graphical form in figs.9 .3A and 9.3B. The actual recordings for each journey are reproduced below in table 9.1 .

Table 9.1 Passengers Joining and Alighting From Sample Trains on The Ipswich to Felixstowe Railway Line.

Train	Time	Date	Ipswich	West'fld	Derby Rd.	Trimley	Fel'stowe
09.15	Thurs	27/5/71	12	1	10	17	36
12.45	"	"	10	NS	1	0	11
16.15	Tues	7/9/71	25	1	7	3	30
16.46	"	"	70	NS	10	1	79
14.15	Weds	8/9/71	18	5	12	6	31
15.46	"	"	48	0	21	4	61
11.15	Sat	11/9/71	56	0	13	1	70
11.46	"	"	22	NS	5	6	25
TOTAL			261	7	79	38	343
AVERAGE			33	1	10	5	43

Note: NS. Several trains did not stop at Westerfield station.

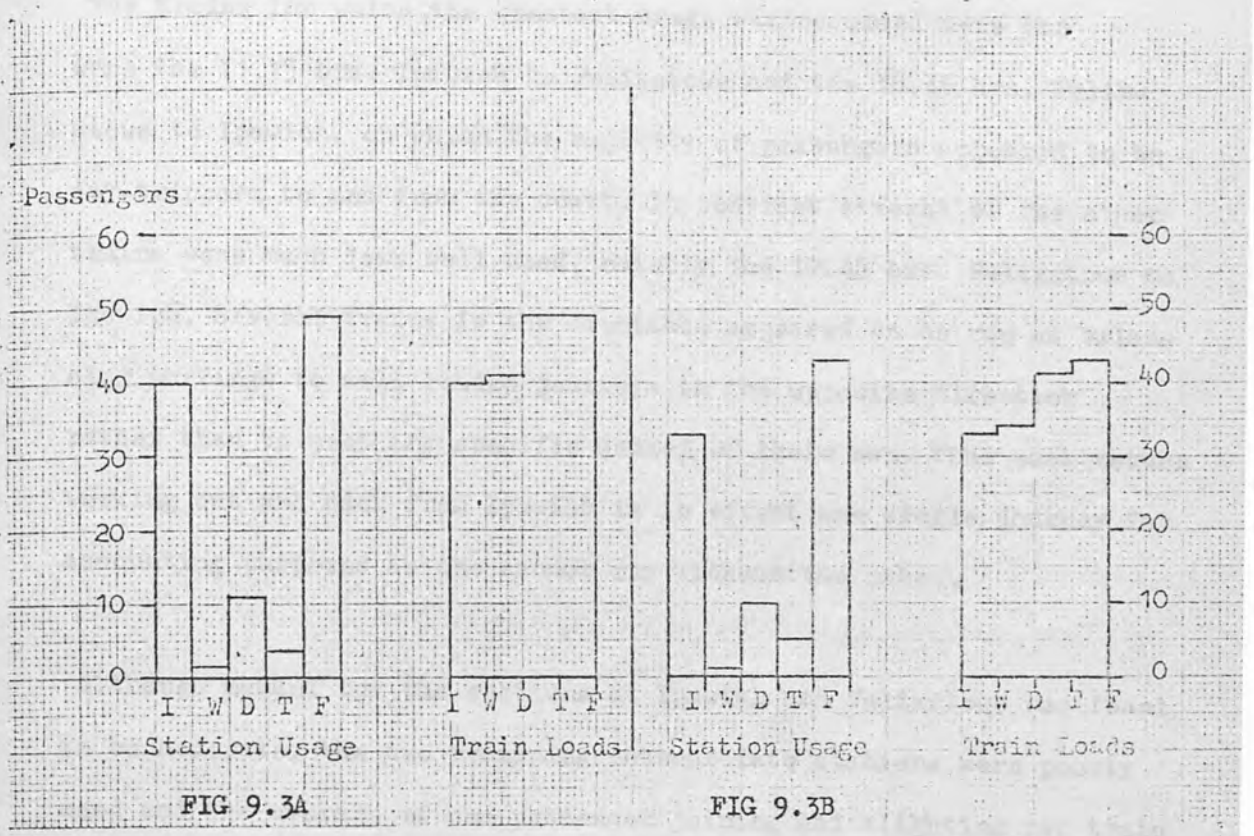


FIG 9.3A

FIG 9.3B

KEY TO STATIONS.

I	Ipswich (Main Line)
W	Westerfield
D	Derby Road (Ipswich)
T	Trimley
F	Felixstowe Town

Fig. 9.3 A Record of station usage and loads on trains on Ipswich to Felixstowe Railway Line. Six journeys September 1971.

Fig. 9.3 B Record of station usage and loads on trains on Ipswich to Felixstowe Railway Line. Eight journeys May and September 1971.

The trains for which the greatest usage was recorded were the were the 11.15 hrs. Ipswich to Felixstowe and the 16.46 hrs. Felixstowe to Ipswich, on which the majority of passengers appeared to be day-trippers to and from the coast. In contrast several of the other trains were much less well used, notably the 12.45 hrs. Felixstowe to Ipswich. Several trains in the timetable appeared to be run as balancing workings to well loaded journeys in the opposite direction rather than to meet any specific demand of their own. Thus each return working out and back from Ipswich is in effect one single journey for accounting purposes as one cannot run without the other.

Although demand for the stations at Ipswich and Felixstowe was found to be moderate, the two remaining intermediate stations were poorly used and the average of one passenger joining and alighting per train calling at Westerfield station was no better than for the few East Suffolk Line trains which stopped there. The fact that much of the traffic on the line is local in nature may be seen from the graph of train loadings (fig 9.3) , which has its peak near the terminus furthest away from the connection with other lines.

From the information available it seems that outside the summer peak period the demand for the Ipswich to Felixstowe rail passenger service is no more than moderate at best and some of the trains are poorly loaded. In addition there is growing competition from the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company routes which run parallel to the line for much of its length, and also from private transport, which is being aided by large scale (and very expensive) improvements to the A45 road between the towns. If the passenger service were operated in isolation then a closure proposal would probably have been put forward by now, but fortunately freight traffic on the line has

expanded rapidly in the last few years owing to the rapid development of the port at Felixstowe. The operation of the shuttle passenger service adds little to the maintenance costs necessary for the freight services and simplification of station facilities in connection with the introduction of conductor/guard operation in 1967 means that only direct operating costs would be saved by its withdrawal. If a withdrawal of the passenger service were to be contemplated in the near future then it would certainly cause much inconvenience to summer day-trippers, many of whom rely on the line to beat the severe seasonal road congestion in and near Felixstowe. Year round hardship would be much less because of the frequent Eastern Counties Omnibus Company services in the area.

Conclusion.

Although there have been no moves to close lines in East Suffolk not included in the black-list in the 1963 Reshaping Report, all the remainder have suffered to a greater or lesser extent from rationalization measures. Only one true branch-line remains in the county, between Ipswich and Felixstowe but only the main-line between Ipswich and Norwich may be considered 'inter-city' in the character of its passenger service. The county has been more fortunate than some other parts of East Anglia, notably north-west Norfolk and Lincolnshire, where several lines considered to be viable by Beeching have since been the subject of successful 'axings'.

Throughout the major part of the 1960s the main emphasis of Government policy towards railway passenger services was towards reducing losses by contracting the national network. However, in the second half of the decade the Government realised that this policy was being extended too far and introduced the concept of aiding socially desirable but uneconomic passenger services by means of grants to offset

losses. This change in policy has greatly affected the prospects for the survival of the remaining railway passenger services throughout East Anglia. The effect of grant-aid on the railway passenger services in East Suffolk is examined in more detail in the following chapter.

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3. E R Williams, 'The Problem of Unremunerative Passenger Train Services', British Transport Review, Volume 4, April 1956.
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5. D I Gordon, 'A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Volume 5, Eastern Counties', David and Charles, 1968, Chapter 4.
6. Evening Star, 7/5/71. "In a parish council survey in Needham Market in 1970, 472 people said they would use the station in varying degrees".
7. The Daily Telegraph, 23/11/71. "Needham Market station...is the first closed under the 1962 Transport Act to be reintroduced into regular public service. It is expected that increased receipts will make the grant-aided Cambridge to Ipswich line more viable".
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CHAPTER 10.

The Problems of Grant - Aid to Railway Passenger Services, With Particular Reference To East Suffolk.

Since the mid 1950s the railway system of Great Britain has been suffering increasing financial losses in successive years, resulting in a series of Government decisions to 'write-off' the accumulated deficit. The object of the Reshaping Report in 1963 was to eliminate the deficit by withdrawing all loss making services. By the mid 1960s it had become obvious that all the withdrawals that had been made were having very little effect on the railway system's overall economic position. The 1968 Transport Act brought about a reversal of both Government and British Railways policy towards loss making lines. According to the Commercial Manager of the Norwich Division of British Railways the Government had previously been in a dilemma whether to run the railway system as a social service or a straightforward business, and the 1968 Act had achieved an "excellent compromise", in that it divided the system into two sectors; business and social service (1*)

In December 1968 the Government announced that £62 Million was to be provided annually as social grants to uneconomic passenger services, after consultations with the Regional Economic Planning Councils. Lines wholly or partly in East Suffolk which were to receive grants in 1969 included:

Ipswich - Colchester local service	£18,000
Norwich - Lowestoft	£148,000
Ipswich - Cambridge	£188,000
Ipswich - Lowestoft	£246,000
Ipswich - Felixstowe	£82,000

So, under the terms of the Act all passenger services in East Suffolk apart from the inter-city service between London, Ipswich and Norwich

were classified as social services. In subsequent years grants have been renewed on a one, two or three year basis, with some variations in the amounts paid from year to year. Following a change of governing party in 1970 the position altered slightly and from 1971 the Minister of Transport decided to limit grants to a maximum of two years whilst he considered the whole question of public support for unremunerative passenger services (2*).

Far from removing doubts about the future of rail passenger services, the introduction of Government grant-aid has caused considerable uncertainty, as well as controversy about the way that the grant figures were computed. The two major problems created by grant-aid were; firstly, that the short periods for which Government would commit itself to providing assistance caused much uncertainty for both British Railways management and the local population, and secondly, that the sums of money involved in the grants for individual lines were considered excessively large by most interested parties outside British Railways itself.

Both of these areas of contention have been particularly evident in connection with the grant-aid provided for the East Suffolk Line. National Union of Railwaymen officials have claimed that the line's stated loss was based on "a complete fallacy and costing errors"(3*). The Union put the line's true loss at £90,000 per annum rather than the £246,000 claimed by British Railways at that time. Unfortunately British Railways has been extremely reticent about revealing details of the accounting procedure followed when grant-aid estimates are made, especially in connection with individual lines (4*). After much pressure from the local rail users' association, the East Suffolk Travellers' Association, British Railways local management finally agreed to divulge figures showing how the grant-aid allocated to the

East Suffolk Line was actually spent, in broad terms, revealing that most of the money allocated to the line for renewal of capital equipment was in fact being used elsewhere and that it would not be spent on the line "until British Railways could foresee adequate returns for its investment there" (5*).The reluctance of British Railways to spend the money allocated is a direct result of the short periods for which grant-aid was guaranteed by the Government. British Railways are understandably hesitant to spend large sums of money on major structural works, such as bridge and culvert renewal, when the possibility of their redundancy in a year or two might lead to the money being almost completely wasted.

Instead of investing in major works on the East Suffolk Line, British Railways has spent a number of small sums on minor repairs, which could prolong the life of the existing old equipment for a few more years,until a firm long-term plan for the future of the line is finally settled.

Uncertainty over the long-term future of the railway passenger services in East Suffolk, especially the East Suffolk Line itself, has been a cause for concern for many of the local authorities in the county, particularly as Ministers of Transport have occasionally stated that all social grants might be withdrawn at some indefinite future date for national financial and political reasons. At the Annual Conference of the Rural District Councils Association in October 1971 the Minister suggested that 200 railway lines in rural areas could be closed in the following eighteen months, adding that although the Government was paying £30 million per year to keep unprofitable rural rail services, there had to be a very powerful social, economic or practical reason to justify continuance on such

a scale (6*,7*). He said that a review was to be made to ensure that "public money spent in this sector is giving a reasonable return either from the economic or social viewpoint".

East Suffolk County Council has frequently expressed its concern that long-term plans should be resolved for the future of railway facilities. The council was very concerned about the effects which the continued uncertainty about the future of railway lines was having on planning decisions involving major capital projects, such as the construction of major road works (8*). The County Council has pressed on a number of occasions for a guaranteed social grant for the East Suffolk Line for a period of at least ten years, so that British Railways can make reasonable long-term investments to reduce operating costs and improve services (7*).

One of the arguments against the method of accounting used in allocating grant-aid to railway passenger services is that each service is considered as an isolated entity rather than as part of the overall railway system of an area. Heated controversy has arisen at public enquiries into railway closure proposals and in the press about the nature and extent of the inter-dependence between adjoining railway lines. The problems of identifying the extent of contributory revenue in relation to the individual railway passenger services in East Suffolk is examined in the following chapter.

References.

1. Lowestoft Journal, 19/6/70.

2. 'Grant Aid in Question', Railway Magazine, March 1971.

3. Lowestoft Journal, 4/8/70.

4. The Daily Telegraph, 20/10/71. "The only information British Rail have to produce to the Transport Users Consultative Committees when seeking a closure is a brief financial statement and details of how many people are using the line. The (House of Commons Select Committee) report criticises the railways for being 'most reluctant' to furnish enough information about the likely costs of alternatives to enable the public to test the economic case when cutting services".

5. East Suffolk Travellers' Association Annual Report 1971/72, April 1972.

6. J S Gilks (ed.) 'Rural Transport: What Future Now?', Rural District Councils' Association, Report of the One-day Conference 19th. October 1971.

7. Lowestoft Journal, 10/12/71. "It was incorrect to say that at this moment there was any line in East Anglia which actually had an axe poised over it but under the present system there was a constant threat of possible closure, should the subsidy be withdrawn. On the East Suffolk Line there were still 26 manned level crossings. It cost about £20,000 to replace a manned crossing by automatic lifting barriers. Before undertaking expenditure on this scale it was necessary to have a firm assurance that the line had a future over a fairly lengthy period". Statements by Mr G Clarke, Norwich Divisional Manager of British Rail, at a conference called by East Suffolk County Council to discuss local rail transport problems.

8. Lowestoft Journal, 2/1/72. "It was impossible to plan certain road improvement schemes such as the proposed Beccles/Worlingham

by-pass, if there was no indication whether the railway would still be there. In such a case one did not know whether to contemplate going over the railway with a bridge or to ignore it altogether".

CHAPTER 11.

Contributory Revenue and Railway Economics - With Particular Reference to East Suffolk Examples.

When two or more railway lines meet at a common terminus or intermediate point it very likely that there will be a number of passengers making through journeys over all or part of each of them. Opponents of British Railways closure proposals have often claimed that contribution from lines under threat to the overall financial position of those that would remain has often been overlooked or disregarded when policy decisions on the future of individual lines are taken.

In East Suffolk there is still a significant level of through journeying between the lines wholly or partly within the county. Some indication of the effect which the closure of the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth line and the consequent removal of through travellers from the northern part of the East Suffolk Line, has already been examined (Chapter 8). With the aid of 'Heads of Information' statistics it has been possible to quantify the levels of inter-relation between the individual passenger services in the area, principally at either end of the East Suffolk Line.

Contributory Revenue From and To the East Suffolk Line.

A detailed study of the contribution that the East Suffolk Line has made to the revenue of adjoining parts of the East Anglian railway network is possible by means of an examination of the statistical information contained in the 1964/65 'Heads of Information' publication, already used in other contexts (1*) Unfortunately it has not been possible to extract similar information from the 'Heads' information concerned with the proposal to close the Great Yarmouth branch because through train working had ceased by the census dates and it has not been possible to determine the proportion of those recorded

at the time which also used other railway lines in the area.

In the East Suffolk Line report, all passenger journeys over the line on Tuesday 3rd. November 1964 and Saturday 7th. November 1964 were tabulated by origin and destination. It was found that 2,222 individual journeys were made over the line on the Tuesday, of which 139 had origins or destinations on the Yarmouth line - 77 of these were to or from Beccles - and 582 travelled to or from stations beyond Ipswich. On the Saturday there were 2,683 journeys on the East Suffolk Line and 226 of these also covered part of the Yarmouth line - 99 to or from Beccles - whilst 413 had journeys beyond Ipswich.

During the summer peak of 1965 intensive census work was carried out by British Railways for a period of four weeks. On the summer Saturdays there were eleven through trains each way between London and Lowestoft or Great Yarmouth and the number of through passengers beyond Ipswich was recorded for each. The total numbers of through passengers on these trains for each of the four Saturdays are shown below (table11.1). On each of the Saturdays the 22 trains carried more through passengers in each direction than all trains in both directions on the November Saturday. In addition, many more through passengers must have used the regular local service between Ipswich, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, but figures for these are not available.

Table11.1 Passengers Travelling Over the East Suffolk Line and Beyond Ipswich on Through Trains. Four Summer Saturdays 1965.

Date	On to East Suffolk Line From Beyond Ipswich.	Off East Suffolk Line To Beyond Ipswich.	Difference
Sat. 17/7/65	2,054	2,275	221
Sat. 24/7/65	2,362	2,665	303
Sat. 31/7/65	1,628	2,297	669
Sat. 7/8/65	2,137	2,662	525
TOTAL	8,181	9,899	1,718

(Calculated from 'Heads' tables.)

It is apparent from the above table that the majority of passengers on the East Suffolk Line on summer Saturdays in 1965 had their inland origin or destination far from the terminus at Ipswich. One apparent anomaly in the British Railways census figures is that on each of the four Saturdays more passengers appeared to travel through on southbound trains than on northbound trains, the combined total of 1,718 persons being large enough to cast some doubt on the accuracy of the survey methods employed by British Railways to obtain the census figures.

The numbers of through passengers beyond Lowestoft to the Great Yarmouth line on the same four summer Saturdays is shown below (table 11.2). Almost all trains between Ipswich and Lowestoft on these dates continued on to Yarmouth so the figures show more fully the extent of through journeys than do the figures for the southern end of the East Suffolk Line.

Table 11.2 Passengers Travelling Over the East Suffolk Line and Beyond Lowestoft on Through Trains. Four Summer Saturdays 1965.

Date	On to East Suffolk Line From Beyond Lowestoft.	Off East Suffolk Line To Beyond Lowestoft.	Difference
Sat. 17/7/65	2,146	1,835	311
Sat. 24/7/65	2,041	2,187	146
Sat. 31/7/65	1,903	1,567	336
Sat. 7/8/65	2,257	2,025	232
TOTAL	8,347	7,614	733

Again the total numbers of through passengers on the summer Saturdays was very much greater than in the previous November. It has not been possible to find the level of through journeying between the East Suffolk Line, the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth line and the Lowestoft

to Norwich line, but from observations at Lowestoft station it would seem that it is very low. The last through train between the Norwich line and the Yarmouth line, which was summer Saturdays only, was withdrawn about 1962 and there has never been a through service between the Norwich line and the East Suffolk Line.

In contrast to the high level of through journeying between the East Suffolk Line and the Yarmouth line on the four summer Saturdays, figures for Monday to Friday for the same weeks show a somewhat lower level, as shown below (table 11.3).

Table 11.3 Passengers Travelling Over the East Suffolk Line and Beyond Lowestoft on Through Trains. Average Weekday, Four Summer Weeks 1965.

Date	On to East Suffolk Line From Beyond Lowestoft.	Off East Suffolk Line To Beyond Lowestoft.	Difference
W. E. 17/7/65	249	263	14
W. E. 24/7/65	292	251	41
W. E. 31/7/65	473	427	46
W. E. 7/8/65	614	600	14

There is a very marked peaking in through journeys between the East Suffolk Line and the Yarmouth line towards the beginning of August in the weekday figures, further indicating that many users were travelling for recreational purposes.

Conclusions.

The information contained in the 'Heads' tables confirms that the railway passenger service between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth contributed a significant number of journeys, and thus revenue, to the main section of the East Suffolk Line and that the East Suffolk Line itself contributed, and probably still does, many journeys to the Ipswich to London main-line service. The sudden dramatic decline

in the patronage of the northern East Suffolk Line stations following the closure of the Yarmouth line suggests that its contributory revenue should have been taken more into account when its closure was being contemplated. The argument sometimes put forward by British Railways that former rail passengers will continue to use the nearest railhead following the closure of their most convenient station does not seem to have been borne out by experience in many cases, such as in northern East Suffolk, where many rail journeys are local in character and the effort involved in using a less convenient station may be greater than if the entire journey were undertaken by a different form of transport. So, any plan to once again propose the closure of the East Suffolk Line, or the Felixstowe branch should be very carefully examined to see what effect such action would have on the viability of the Norwich - Ipswich - London 'Inter - City' service.

Contributions made by one line to the finances of adjoining lines may be relatively easily quantified by means of surveys, but this is not the only form of revenue which opponents of closure proposals claim is being ignored when British Railways presents its figures.

Contributions to Railway Line Revenue From Non-Passenger Sources.

One argument often raised against British Railways closure proposals is that income from some of the less well known sources other than directly from passengers or freight carried are not taken into account when losses are announced. An indication that the contribution to line revenue from freight traffic has often been ignored or under-estimated is the fact that lines closed to passenger traffic are sometimes retained in a basically unchanged condition for freight traffic. An example of such a retention is the former branch-line

between Saxmundham and Aldeburgh, which remains to provide facilities for the nuclear power station at Sizewell and a coal concentration depot at Leiston. The 1973 grant-aid for the East Suffolk Line was increased dramatically to £371,000, yet freight traffic south of Melton, near Woodbridge has greatly increased following the opening of a roadstone depot in 1972 (2*). The large grants for the Felixstowe branch passenger service seem to take no account of the growing revenue from the freight traffic to and from Felixstowe docks, the composition of which demands a high standard of track maintenance.

Other incomes, individually small, but collectively significant, accrue from activities such as; renting station buildings and surplus station yards to local industries, bookstalls, offices and advertisers. Lowestoft Central has all of these plus a profitable British Railways operated cafeteria. Several of the intermediate stations on the East Suffolk Line generate regular income from the renting of surplus buildings and land. At Halesworth clothing and engineering companies occupy former goods sheds and at Woodbridge the former goods shed is used as a warehouse by a local company. Unfortunately none of the companies which rent sites at the intermediate stations on the East Suffolk Line send or receive any goods by rail as all facilities for general freight traffic have been removed from the line as part of British Railways' policy of concentrating freight movements on a few large, widely spaced sites.

When closure proposals were made by British Railways in East Suffolk, no mention was made of income from non-passenger sources, even when, as in the case of platform bookstalls, the retention of the passenger service is a prerequisite for continued income. In the four year period to 1970 the district estate surveyors of the Norwich Division of British Railways sold surplus land to the value of £1·5 Million

and annual revenue from rents had risen to £200,000 (3*). However, an examination of the non-operational revenue from a profit/loss viewpoint, as encouraged in the Reshaping Report of 1963, would show that most of the rental income would continue, if not increase, as more land became available when passenger services were withdrawn and station buildings and yards were released for alternative uses. From an economic standpoint it would be quite possible for British Railways to become a profitable property owning organization without having to struggle with the problems of providing socially necessary but loss making railway passenger services.

Some capital resources associated with the provision of railway passenger services but which have become surplus to requirements may yield a useful income from outside users, however a switch of use is not always possible. Where this is the case unwanted structures may become a financial millstone around the neck of British Railways. The problems resulting from the need to maintain redundant capital equipment are now examined, with particular reference to the lines which still have a passenger service. Several lengths of railway trackbed which have been completely closed for many years have still not been put to any worthwhile alternative use,but fortunately there have been a number of instances where the old railway trackbed was conveniently located for use as the base for a new or improved road. Part of the Waveney Valley line between Bungay and Harleston has been used for large scale improvements to the A143 road in recent years and plans exist to use further stretches in the near future.

Problems Arising From Redundant Capital Equipment on Railway Lines - With Particular Reference to East Suffolk Examples.

Whereas some capital equipment and facilities no longer needed for the reduced level of passenger train service operation can be converted to some other form of useful function, many of the larger structures on lines which have had their services reduced in recent years have become a heavy burden on financial resources, whilst contributing little or nothing to revenue. In addition, some of the massive Victorian structures erected at the opening of lines in the Nineteenth Century have become increasingly expensive to maintain, or are in need of renewal at considerable expense.

The cost of the maintenance of station buildings in relation to the level of passenger usage made of them has been very carefully examined by railway management in recent years, with a view to reducing maintenance costs to the minimum possible, whilst retaining basic passenger facilities. In East Suffolk, most stations on the East Suffolk Line and the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth line were built to cater for a high level of usage, with several waiting rooms and staff offices, most of which became redundant following the introduction of basic railway services in 1967. Later that year surplus waiting rooms at Corton and Hopton stations on the Yarmouth line were demolished and at most stations on both lines waiting accomodation was closed and boarded. In addition toilet facilities were closed because there was no longer any staff to keep them clean. These sudden inconveniences caused a great deal of hostility from rail passengers.

Fortunately several of the larger station buildings were found to be suitable for leasing to private companies or individuals for

commercial or residential uses (see page 102), which not only provide a continuing source of revenue but also prevent stations from assuming a derelict appearance. No station building demolition has occured on the East Suffolk Line or the Felixstowe branch, although on the latter the single platform still in use at Felixstowe station is surrounded by a large semi-derelict building and a rubbish strewn former sidings area (at September 1971).

Although under-utilised buildings may be put to alternative uses, the same is very rarely the case with bridges, cuttings, embankments, cuttings and culverts. Although several of the major road bridges over the East Suffolk Line were completely rebuilt during the 1950s, others are becoming due for major repairs, and a large part of the social grant the line is now receiving has been put aside for this purpose. On closed lines, such as the Great Yarmouth line, it is still necessary for maintenance work to be carried out on disused bridges, to prevent them from getting into a dangerous condition. The cost of removing disused bridges can in itself be very expensive, especially when bridges include large steel girders. Some large bridges on disused lines have been left in situ for many years because of the cost of removal. The five-span girder bridge over the River Yare, on the connecting line between the Yarmouth to Lowestoft line and the Midland and Great Northern system, which closed in 1953, was not removed until the 1960s because of the difficulties involved. It was only finally removed because it was in a dangerous condition and liable to fall into the river.

The depreciation of major capital structures and prospective heavy renewal expenditure in the near future have an influence on long-term planning decisions concerning uneconomic and marginal railway

services. It was in an attempt to delay such expenses for as long as possible that a 45 miles per hour speed restriction was placed on locomotive hauled trains on the East Suffolk Line in 1963 (4*). The Great Yarmouth line was reduced from double to single track in 1967, but so far similar plans for the East Suffolk Line have not been implemented, neither have plans to convert the many manually operated level crossing gates to automatic operation. The reason given for the delay in carrying out these plans is that, although in the long run operating costs would be greatly reduced, the uncertain future of Government assistance to the line has made it difficult for British Railways to commit itself to the heavy expenditure initially involved in the purchase and installation of the electrical equipment required (5*). The retention of staff to operate level-crossings is a heavy expenditure on the East Suffolk Line, where the cheap construction policy caused them to proliferate. Traffic regulations mean that crossings on cart tracks, perhaps not used by any road traffic on some days, must be served by a full-time railway employee. Elimination of this expense by either closing the crossings altogether or providing telephone control has enabled some savings to be made in the last few years.

The introduction of the basic railway concept to the surviving railway passenger services in East Suffolk in 1967 has enabled many redundant facilities to be removed and thus maintenance costs to be reduced. East Anglia was the first region in Britain to introduce such measures and their success has led to similar developments in most other parts of the Country in recent years (6*).

Problems of The Provision of Railway Passenger Services in East Suffolk - Conclusions

The recent history of the railway passenger services in East Suffolk has been one of a series of problems of both an economic and a social nature. Passenger demand, which has steadily declined since the mid 1950s and National Government policy decisions have set the local railway management continuous difficulties in its attempts to maintain existing passenger services on an economic basis. Some of the more uneconomic lines have been closed, yet the overall financial situation of those that remain seems to have deteriorated even further. Most of the economies introduced in an attempt to reduce operating costs to a minimum, such as: destaffing stations, the introduction of conductor/guard working, withdrawing freight facilities from small stations, simplifying signalling and closing level-crossings, seem to have had only limited beneficial effect on the finances of surviving lines.

The introduction of the grant-aid policy in 1968 has helped to alleviate some of the difficulties of providing loss-making passenger services but it has failed to provide a secure basis for the future development of these lines. Local authorities and residents have been in a state of uncertainty about the future of most of the county's railway passenger services for more than a decade, since the publication of the Reshaping Report, and there seems to be little hope that assurances will be forthcoming from the Government in the near future to quell their anxieties. Only the 'Inter-City' service between Norwich, Ipswich and London appears to have a reasonably secure future. Recently timetables for the line have been improved and large sums spent on new trackwork and lineside fixtures and there is the possibility of an extension of electrification from Colchester to Ipswich in

a few years time. However, the pattern and standard of services on the other lines in the county has remained virtually unaltered for several years and the stringent economies necessitated by the receipt of grant-aid have meant that little has been done to improve the standard of service offered to the public. The availability of grant-aid has meant that the local railway administration has been able to relax in its attempts to reduce expenditure by sweeping cuts in ancillary facilities such as toilets and waiting rooms, the sudden removal of which caused much bitterness in the 1960s. At the same time economies are still being made, notably in the field of closing or destaffing level-crossings.

It seems probable that the provision of railway passenger services in East Suffolk will continue to be thwart with uncertainty into the foreseeable future and the extent to which problems can be overcome will depend more on National Government policy decisions than on the wishes or expertise of the local railway management or the regular rail users.

Although this study has concentrated on the problems faced by British Railways rather than of the many residents of and visitors to the county who use rail transport facilities, it hopefully conveys the warning against the closure of more passenger services, because of the great extent of the hardship and inconvenience which would almost certainly result.

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4. D I Gordon, 'A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Volume 5 - Eastern Counties', David & Charles, 1968, p88.
5. Lowestoft Journal, 10/12/71. "On the East Suffolk Line there were still 26 manned level crossings. It cost £20,000 to replace a manned crossing by automatic lifting barriers."
6. Lowestoft Journal, 17/10/69, " The introduction of collector-guards two years ago has achieved great savings on the East Suffolk Line...it means a total saving of £500,000 in the Norwich Division."

SECTION 3: Problems of Rural Omnibus Provision.

CHAPTER 12.

The Post War Development of Rural Omnibus Services in Britain, With Particular Reference to East Suffolk.

Since the mid 1960s the problems involved in the provision of rural public transport services have been receiving considerable attention at the national level, but the problems themselves have been gradually increasing in urgency since the mid 1950s. Frequencies on many rural bus services were never more than one or two journeys per day and so the greater mobility afforded by personal transport became attractive in country areas earlier than in most towns, where bus services were generally more frequent and journeys much shorter. Some rural routes had never been more than marginally economic and only a very small drift away from public transport was necessary for services to start making losses.

By 1955 the British Transport Commission was operating 200,000,000 unremunerative vehicle miles per year on rural routes (1*). Even at that time it was recognized that fare increases might reduce patronage further and that reduced frequencies often resulted in reduced travel but did not always reduce operating costs (2*,3*). An article in the trade magazine 'Bus and Coach' of April 1956 put forward a number of possible alternatives for assisting rural bus services (4*). some of which were to reappear in Government sponsored studies in 1971. The two principal suggestions put forward in the article were for either direct Government subsidization, or for some form of area integrated working. The use of small buses was rejected as a solution, for economic reasons, nevertheless such suggestions have been put forward in various forms in a number of later studies.

One of the first intensive studies of rural transport problems in an area of Britain was undertaken in 1957-58 on behalf of the

Northumberland Rural Community Council (5*). The study concluded that unless drastic measures were taken rural transport in mid Northumberland would collapse completely within a few years, as nearly all stage services were running at losses of up to 6d.(2½p.) per mile. To alleviate the problem it was proposed that subsidies be provided, preferably to small independent operators, who it was felt could offer the more economical method of operating isolated rural services.

A Government sponsored study of rural transport problems published in 1958 (6*,7*) concluded that the introduction of mini-buses on some rural routes might alleviate the rural transport problem. However their full-time operation was not envisaged but rather part-time use by voluntary organizations, garages and those who could employ the vehicles for the carriage of goods also. In argument against this proposal it was stated that small buses could not be made to pay because of the nature of wage costs and the fact that they could not meet the peak demands which arose even in rural areas on market days and Saturdays (7*).

The outcome of the widespread concern felt in the late 1950s over the future of rural bus services was a Government committee, which was mandated in September 1959: (8*)

"to review present trends in rural bus services and in particular to enquire into the adequacy of these services, to consider possible methods of ensuring adequate services in future, and to make recommendations".

The principal conclusions reached by the 'Jack' Committee were that: the main cause for concern was the increase in competition from private transport; mini-buses could not help solve the problems, and; 'multi-purpose' carriers might help, although it was felt that postal

buses on the Swiss or German pattern would not be advantageous. The publication of the report of the Committee in March 1961 promoted considerable response from within and outside the industry. E F Horobin, writing in 'Bus and Coach' (9*) thought that it provided proof of the need for a simple scheme of subsidy payments for rural bus services by the county councils. Christison (10*) and an editorial in 'Bus and Coach' (11*) concluded that the best method of operation for rural bus services would be for major operators to hold the road service licences and to hire small local companies to conduct the actual operation, with maintenance being the responsibility of the larger companies. However, the prospects for the future of the small rural operators was already becoming a cause for concern because of the absence of cross-subsidization from more economic urban services (12*) and lack of sufficient capital for investment in vehicle replacement, which could lead to the operation of life-expired vehicles of a low standard of comfort and performance (13*).

Despite the flow of pessimistic forecasts for the future of rural bus services in Britain the Government did not pursue any of the proposals contained in the Jack Report. It thought that cross-subsidization from urban routes for major operators and from garage and petrol station receipts for the small operators would continue to be sufficient to support a minimum of facilities in most areas (14*,15*).

In March 1965 the Chairman of the Passenger Vehicle Operators Association pleaded with the Government to aid rural services by reducing fuel taxation (16*). He claimed that unless "immediate action was taken" there would be a gradual run-down and eventually a total withdrawal of rural operation. A further Government sponsored study began its investigations in 1964 (17*). Its object was to

study local travel facilities in selected rural districts in Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Westmoreland and to consider what improvements were needed. The results, published in early 1965, were dicouraging. It found that experiments in direct subsidies to new bus services had been unsuccessful and all of them had to be discontinued for lack of adequate support. It was also found that the use of school buses as a means of helping ordinary passengers was very limited as there were seldom any spare seats, they were only available during school term-time and the return journeys in the afternoon were not generally convenient for shoppers or workers.

The growth in private motoring had become a very serious threat to the survival of the vast majority of the remaining rural bus routes by the mid 1960s and it was anticipated that most journeys to work by rural inhabitants would soon desert the remaining services. However residual demands were expected to remain, particularly from schoolchildren, old people and housewives (18*,19*) but not in sufficient numbers to enable the retention of more than the barest skeleton services, unless there was to be some form of subsidy paid to the bus companies.

Although the Government announced its intention in 1967 to formulate a comprehensive policy in an attempt to alleviate Britain's transport problems (20*), including those of rural bus services, the action came too late to save many routes throughout the country. Earlier the same year Crosville Motor Services (a National Bus Company subsidiary) withdrew a large number of its lesser used rural services in north Wales and several other large operators were threatening similar action (21*). The 1967 Government report recognized that it should contribute social grants towards the cost of maintaining some services to outlying areas where the decline of public transport

was threatening to completely isolate people in remoter communities.

When the Government's promised policy document appeared as the 1968 Transport Bill it included specific proposals for helping rural bus services. Section 34 of the bill gave local authorities above parish level permission to pay grants "for the benefit of persons residing in rural areas" if they wished to do so (22*). It thus recognized that in areas of low population density bus operators were faced with the problem of providing essential social services, the demand for which was inadequate to cover the full cost of operation (23*), and that such routes would have to be subsidised if they were to continue. The introduction of grant-aid was warmly welcomed by the small rural operators, many of whom had very little margin left for absorbing increasing costs (24*).

Unfortunately the prospect of grant-aid for rural bus services brought about an increase in the flow of proposals to withdraw routes, as this action was the only method available to operators to convince local authorities that assistance was essential. In the second half of 1970 most National Bus Company subsidiaries throughout Britain published extensive lists of rural routes which they intended to discontinue unless subsidies were provided. This action followed a directive from National Bus Company headquarters on September 17th. 1970 to its subsidiary companies, to reduce the burden of loss making rural services "as necessary to restore the overall financial position" (25*,26*). The inter-relationships between groups of rural routes were stressed by the National Bus Company:

"The retention of a single service when others in the area are withdrawn can be particularly costly. The Company would like discussions to be held between an operating company and a group of

district councils", to see whether such services could be continued with the aid of rural bus grants.

Subsidies to Rural Routes in East Suffolk.

The Eastern Counties Omnibus Company (ECOC), operating many rural routes in East Suffolk and throughout most of northern East Anglia, was one of the National Bus Company subsidiaries to produce extensive route reduction plans in September 1970. The reason the Company gave was that heavy losses on some rural routes were causing a serious deterioration of the Company's financial position (27*). Routes threatened at this time included the service connecting Southwold with Halesworth, Laxfield and South Elmham (route number 8/8A), the connection between Beccles and Tivetshall (route 71) following the Norfolk/Suffolk boundary, and the route between Stowmarket and Bury St. Edmunds (route 412). As a direct result of the ECOC proposals the General Purposes Committee of East Suffolk County Council discussed the principle of the provision of subsidies for the threatened routes, in November 1970 (28*). The future of the connection between Southwold and Halesworth caused the meeting most concern. Southwold Borough Council had already expressed the opinion that were the route to be withdrawn the town would become isolated and also that the removal of the connection the bus service made with the East Suffolk railway line could have serious consequences for the line's financial position. After discussion the County Council agreed that the Southwold service should receive a subsidy of £1627 for a one year experimental period, half of which would be contributed by the Government and half taken from county rates. However, social need was not considered to be sufficient to justify the provision of a grant to ensure the continuation of the Halesworth - Laxfield section of route 8, or routes 71 and 412, which were all withdrawn as from January 2nd. 1971. Later the same month ECOC announced that many

more rural routes would need grants if they were to continue. Faced with the development of a serious situation the County Council called a special conference of representatives from all the nineteen borough and district councils in East Suffolk (29*).The meeting was told that several services would be withdrawn unless the bus company received subsidies amounting to £14,000 to meet working losses. One of the routes threatened was service 54, between Lowestoft, Blundeston and Great Yarmouth, for which a £1289 grant was requested for one year's operation (30*).The route was stated to have been used by 850 people each week in summer months but was nevertheless still running at a loss.

In February 1971 the County Council General Purposes Committee agreed to provide up to £5,000 to save eleven routes (31*), but some other routes, including service 54, were not recommended for assistance. A meeting between Council representatives and bus company officials in April 1971 resulted in the announcement that 36 further routes would be withdrawn unless subsidies amounting to £65,000 per year were forthcoming. The new proposals were sufficiently alarming to prompt the County Council to establish a special sub-committee to investigate the problems involved in the operation of rural services in the area (32*,33*). As well as the complete service withdrawals, the bus company proposed to severely reduce or curtail many other routes, including almost all the surviving rural services in the Ipswich area.

The principal outcome of the County Council's investigations was a scheme to group the threatened services into high, middle and low priorities as a basis for consideration for subsidy. Six services were allocated high priority, including route 2 between Lowestoft and Beccles and route 32 between Southwold, Beccles and Bungay. For these

six routes the total grant, including a 50% Government contribution was to be £12,000 per annum. Four middle priority routes were to receive £5,600 and four low priority routes in the Ipswich area were to receive £6,500 per year. The remaining routes were not recommended for subsidy by the County Council, although no restrictions were placed on the possibility of local authorities providing money if they saw fit.

The widespread rural service reductions were introduced by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company in June 1971 and several other National Bus Company subsidiaries throughout England and Wales undertook similar measures at about the same time. Not unexpectedly the withdrawals and the reductions in frequencies on remaining routes engendered numerous complaints from rural communities and there were some attempts made at organizing alternative means of public transport, including the hiring of mini-buses to transport small groups of people from villages to towns on a regular basis. In Suffolk, Demnington Over-60s Club followed this procedure. The Club hired a mini-bus to take elderly patients and visitors to doctors surgeries in Framlingham (34*), because the reductions and changes in the ECOC timetable meant that the village's inhabitants could no longer reach the surgeries by public transport. The new service was to be very infrequent, leaving the village square every Thursday at 09.20 hrs.

The widespread concern about the future of rural passenger transport in Britain being felt in 1971, resulted in a series of Government and local authority reports on ways in which the problems could be overcome. In July 1971 two pilot studies of rural transport problems (35*) were published for the Department of the Environment, conducted in Devon and West Suffolk. The reports' conclusions and recommendations were remarkably similar to those contained in the 'Jack Committee'

report of a decade earlier. According to a covering memo by Mr. J D Jones of the Department of the Environment, the reports brought out four main points, namely:

a) There was still a role for the bus in rural areas, although a limited one, perhaps supported by rural bus grants under section 34 of the 1968 Transport Act.

b) Cars might be a better form of transport to meet the needs of isolated irregular journeys by people without their own transport.

c) There may be scope for greater use of mini-buses, either on a regular basis or to meet a specific need.

d) Local authorities have a vital role becaus the decisions on rural bus grants are theirs and because of their responsibility for transport in connection with education, health and welfare facilities.

These reports received as mixed a reception as had their predecessors and the findings of the report for West Suffolk, the reactions to it and the possible applications of its findings to the conditions in East Suffolk, are examined in more detail from page 121.

The future of rural public passenger transport in Britain was the subject of a special conference of the Rural District Councils Association held in October 1971 (36*,37*). The conference gave an opportunity for the Minister for the Environment to further expand upon the Government's proposals for solving rural transport problems. He reiterated that it was for the local authorities to decide which rural services should receive grants and expressed disappointment that up to that time only £1 million gross had been spent on rural bus grants, whereas an annual £30 million was being spent on rural railways. In setting out proposed licensing alterations, the Minister explained that existing restrictive conditions would be replaced by a

situation in which exemption from road service licensing would be allowed for small vehicles, excursions and tours, works and school contract services, services supported by rural bus grants and those which are provided as a condition of consent to the closure of a rail service. He concluded by stressing that rail and bus services must be withdrawn when they had become "grossly uneconomic and/or unsuitable to local circumstances".

The proposals put forward by the Government in the two area studies and at the Rural District Councils Association conference were received very unenthusiastically by bus operators and local authorities alike and up to the present (mid 1973) no moves have been made to implement the more contentious measures.

So, all interested parties had come to agree by the early 1970s that the continuation of rural bus services in many parts of Britain, including most of East Anglia, in either the existing or a modified form, was likely to present increasing problems. However, agreement on the course which should be taken to alleviate the expected problems has been much less widespread. Although some local authorities, including East Suffolk County Council, have agreed to give financial aid to bus companies to maintain socially necessary services, others have been much less forthcoming, especially when the operating company applying for grant aid has been a National Bus Company subsidiary (38*).

The relevance of the 1971 Government report into rural public transport in West Suffolk to the conditions in East Suffolk is examined in the following pages and this is followed by an examination of the organization of the operators which provide the rural stage-carriage services in the county.

The Report of The Steering Group Study of Rural Transport in West Suffolk. (35*)

The study undertaken on behalf of the Department of the Environment of rural public passenger transport in West Suffolk was one of a pair authorised by the Government in October 1970 , the other being for Devon, with the general objective: "to study the passenger transport needs in certain areas of West Suffolk and possible means of meeting them in order to provide material for a general assessment of the problem of providing for the transport needs of rural dwellers". (report para.1.2).

The background study of the report put most of the blame for the sharp overall fall in ECOC passenger journeys between 1952 and 1969 (table 13.3) on the private motor car. It recognized that West Suffolk had become a particularly difficult area for the company:

> "They (ECOC) have, at least in (West Suffolk) been up against great and increasing difficulties in their efforts to run reasonably reliable services and keep the maximum possible network in operation." (report para. 2.5).

As one-man operation had been extended to its limit, increases in wage costs were seen to be a major problem as there was no longer any room left to reduce them without withdrawing services. Increases in fares were thought to be a further cause of losses in patronage and as a result ECOC and four independent operators had applied for local authority subsidies under Section 34 of the Transport Act 1968, but the study found that some other independents "afflicted perhaps less by wage escalation and with smaller overheads" had not yet made any such applications, although perhaps only because "their stage operations are supported... by school and works contracts" (report para. 2.8). Looking to the future the ECOC view was found to be that a

situation could develop which would result in no economically viable rural services at all. The company had experienced a 40% drop in passengers carried in sixteen years but little change in mileage run and an increase in the number of vehicles in use, because of greater peaking of the residual passenger demand. In the company's view the future for large operators in rural areas could only be in providing inter-urban routes and market day services and that feeder and contract services could normally be provided more easily by independent operators.

The study found that the independent operators of West Suffolk were experiencing a steady decline in mileage run and that there was a growing reliance on school contract work to maintain an economic income. However there was general optimism that most operators could continue to exist if the Government were to help by remitting more of the fuel duty, reducing road fund licence duty and if they could be assured of local authority grants for uneconomic services, when they were requested. The use of minibuses on rural routes was dismissed by the independent operators, many of whom considered that 29 seat vehicles were near to the optimum size for most rural services. Abolition of service licensing by the Traffic Commissioners was also opposed on the grounds that it would force established operators out of business and lead to a less reliable service to the public.

The field surveys conducted for the study in nine parishes in West Suffolk found that only 7% of the population regularly used public transport and only 25% used it more than once a month. Most frequent use of bus services was found to be for journeys between villages and towns and 40% of total journeys were made for shopping purposes and 30% for work (report para. 5.1.8).The conclusion reached from these results was that public transport played only a small part in

providing for the transport needs of West Suffolk's rural inhabitants and the private car was already the staple means of transport for most people. The report did accept that there would be some residual need for public transport in the future, mainly from small numbers of the young, the old and housewives (report paras. 6.4 - 6.6).

The only solution the Steering Group could envisage for the rural transport problems in areas where demand was very small and scattered was for greater use to be made of existing spare capacity in cars, by relaxing licensing and providing social car services and club minibuses. (report paras. 7.1 - 7.12) Where demand was likely to be more regular the report placed great stress on support by local authorities, either in the form of direct subsidies or by integrating public transport with school contract services, both of which were financed from the same source. (report paras. 8.1 - 8.6).

The Reception of the Steering Group Report.

Although prepared following close consultation with the rural bus service operators, the report of the Steering Group was received with many misgivings by a number of the independent operators, who thought that many of the proposals would have disadvantageous effects on their existing operations. (39*).

Mr. Jack Mulley, an independent operator with 40 vehicles stationed in both West and East Suffolk, thought that prospective minibus operators would find drivers' wages a major problem as they would have to be the same as those paid to the drivers of larger vehicles. He thought that the only way to secure rural services was through dirct subsidies from local authorities. A spokesman for R O Simonds. an operator with routes in the Stowmarket and Diss areas, thought that where there was an existing local service it should be protected from

possible indiscriminate competition resulting from the proposed licensing changes in favour of paid lifts in cars. Another possible hindrance to greater use being made of cars was the difficulty invisaged regarding insurance premiums, which were already very high (40*).

Relevance of the Steering Group Report to Conditions in East Suffolk.

Many of the problems of rural transport provision found in West Suffolk are also present in East Suffolk. Although there are differences in physical geography - principally the long coastline of East Suffolk - and in demography - the greater domination of the East Suffolk transport network by the two large urban centres - some of the findings of the steering group report may be directly related to the conditions prevailing in East Suffolk.

In the north-west corner of East Suffolk operating conditions are almost exactly the same for rural bus companies as in neighbouring parts of West Suffolk. Several rural routes of both the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company and independent operators extend for considerable distances on either side of the county boundary.

The decline in patronage of the remaining East Suffolk rural routes has been at least as severe as the report found in West Suffolk. The ECOC figures given to the Steering Group were for East Anglia as a whole, so the same must be true for most of the region. Local authorities in both East and West Suffolk have acknowledged that they must take the responsibility to help maintain access to public transport wherever there is a residual need great enough to justify the provision of a social grant.

The Steering Group report found that both the National Bus Company

subsidiary and the small operators were finding the provision of rural services increasingly difficult. The following chapter examines in detail the organization of the bus services operated in East Suffolk by the two types of operator.

References.

1. 'Rural Transport Problems', P.T.A.Journal, April 1957, p 134.

2. B Griffiths, 'Current Economic Trends in Passenger Transport, B & C, April 1956, p121.

3. Cobbett, 'Rural Operating Costs', B & C, January 1956, p 19.

4. A Havard, 'Rural Transport. Is There a Solution?', B & C, April 1956, p19.

5. W Lambden, 'Rural Transport Spotlighted', B & C, March 1958, p82.

6. 'Village Bus', H.M.S.O. 1958.

7. '12-Seaters for Rural Transport', B & C, May 1958, p155. (Review of 'Village Bus').

8. 'Report of Committee on Rural Bus Services', P.T.A.Journal, Editorial, April 1961, p640.

9. E F Horobin, 'The Future of the Rural Bus', B & C, April 1961, p122.

10. W P Christison, 'Rural Bus Services: Some Economic Problems', B.T.R., Vol VI, number 3, April 1961.

11. 'Replacing the Rural Area Pioneers', B & C, Editorial, November 1961, p401.

12. 'Some Problems of the Small Operators of Stage Services', B & C, Editorial, October 1962, p384. "It is often stated that the small operator of stage services is in a far worse plight than the bigger concerns so far as the maintenance of money-losing routes in rural districts is concerned... due to lack of cross-subsidization".

13. W I Skerries, 'This May Happen to You', B & C, November 1963, p432. "Small-margin operation is reasonably satisfactory to the operator until he must replace his vehicle. The price of a new or even recent secondhand machine is quite prohibitive and the

operators must search the more antique secondhand market for a cheap roadworthy bus".

14. R Strachen, 'The Problem of Subsidizing Money-Losing Services', B & C, February 1964, p59. "Rural services survive at present largely because of cross-subsidization. This is just as much the case with the small man who takes the profits from the garage or petrol station to keep his buses going. The general view is that it is...the best solution to the industry's problem of how to continue running rural or marginal services".
15. R Iles, 'Fewer Than 1,500 Passengers a Week', B & C, August 1966, p270. "Where a bus service is operated in conjunction with a garage business, the customers of the garage may pay a relatively high proportion of the company's overhead costs".
16. 'Extinction Facing Rural Bus Services, Claims Chairman of P.V.O.A.', The Transport Journal, Volume 24, April 1965, p326. "He believed that a substantial cut in diesel fuel tax would lead to a settlement of the rural bus question. Otherwise there would be nothing less than a gradual run down of the standard of bus services and a total withdrawal of rural operations with all the consequences of isolation for the agricultural community".
17. 'Rural Bus Services', Report in P.T.A.Journal, August 1965, p376.
18. R Iles, 'What Future For the Rural Bus?', B & C, September 1966, p309.
19. G Clayton and J Rees, 'The Economic Problems of Rural Transport in Wales', University of Wales Press, 1967. "The rural bus operators depend for their survival on specialised contract work such as the transport of schoolchildren, which many undertake on a shoestring, with old and decrepit vehicles. The correct policy is to accept the private car's inevitable domination of the rural transport scene and to ensure that ways and means are found of meeting the residual needs of such groups as the old, the young,

the poor and the infirm".

20. 'Public Transport and Traffic', Ministry of Transport, Cmnd.3481, H.M.S.O.,December 1967. p1 "Nor must the needs of rural areas be overlooked, where the decline of public transport threatens to isolate many people in remote communities".
21. R Mayes, 'Crosville's Service Reductions', Buses, May 1967, p179.
22. W F Sheperd, 'Rates Burden of Rural Buses', Letter in The Daily Telegraph, 14/1/71. A Kent County Councillor who thought section 34 of the Transport Act would lead to lower-tier local authorities being forced to contribute to grants for rural bus services, whether it agrees or not, because the decisions would be taken at county council level.
23. R Iles, 'Economics and the Transport Bill', Buses, April 1968. "Where population density is low operators are faced with the problem of providing services the demand for which is inadequate to cover the full cost of operation. This is the basic problem of rural bus services, many of which are considered 'essential' from a 'social point of view'. If such unprofitable services are deemed essential, they must...be subsidised in some way. Operators...will probably find it difficult to decide impartially which services they would withdraw if there were no subsidy - they may even be tempted to withdraw every unprofitable service and let the authorities subsidise those which they considered essential."
24. R Iles, 'How Far Should Integration Go?', B & C, April 1968,p102.
25. 'Goodbye to the Country Bus', Transport Studies, Volume 5, number 2, November 1970, p3.
26. 'N.B.C. and Loss Making Routes', Buses, November 1970, p442.
27. Lowestoft Journal, 11/9/70.
28. Lowestoft Journal, 13/11/70.
29. Lowestoft Journal, 22/1/71.

30. Lowestoft Journal, 22/1/71. "Barkis Rides Again?"

31. Lowestoft Journal, 30/4/71.

32. Lowestoft Journal, 14/5/71.

33. Evening Star, 11/5/71. "Major alterations and cuts to Eastern Counties services in the Ipswich area will be introduced next month. Most services in the Ipswich area will be altered. The company's traffic manager hoped these adjustments would go a long way towards improving the company's financial position, and would reduce the need for subsidies."

34. East Anglian Daily Times, 18/9/71.

35. 'Study of Rural Transport in West Suffolk', Report By The Steering Group, Department of the Environment, July 1971. Similar report 'Study of Rural Transport in Devon'.

36. 'Rural Transport: What Future Now?', Report of One-Day Conference held 19/10/71, Rural District Councils' Association, November 1971.

37. M Stuart, 'Car Seen as Solution to the Problem of Rural Transport', article in The Guardian, 20/10/71.

38. D Gray, 'Midland Red Fighting For Its Life', article in The Guardian, 22/3/71.

39. East Anglian Daily Times, 31/7/71.

40. D R Taylor, 'Rural Transport', letter in East Anglian Daily Times, 3/8/71.

CHAPTER 13.

The Organization and Development of Rural Stage-Carriage Omnibus Services in East Suffolk Over the Last Decade.

The development of the rural public transport network of East Suffolk has followed a course which has included features typical of rural passenger transport throughout Britain. The local National Bus Company subsidiary, the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company, which operates most of the remaining rural bus services in the county and the small number of independent operators, have all had to contend with a steady decline in patronage, owing largely to competition from the private car. All the operators have had to try to adapt to increasingly difficult economic conditions and have found that less well supported routes have had to be terminated.

Distinctions have frequently been made in the transport press between the problems and advantages of rural bus services being operated by small independent operators or nationalised companies. Hibbs (1*) feels strongly that the independent operator could provide a better service and he specifically mentions ECOC routes to support his argument:

> "In the case of Eastern Counties a number of small businesses were acquired in rural areas which would probably have better been left alone, for services from country districts are more economically provided by operators based in the villages they serve".

In fact, since nationalisation in 1948 ECOC has acquired only eight (2*) independent operators, of which only one had services in East Suffolk. However, between 1932, when the company was formed, and 1948, a total of 56 companies were taken over. Many of these companies were acquired in name only for their excursion and tour licences but in a few cases the continued operation of rural stage services was a condition prescribed by the Traffic Commissioners. Some of the larger town based

independent operators in East Suffolk have also acquired smaller concerns, although stage-carriage services have seldom been involved. One of the more recent examples was the acquisition of the excursion and tours licences, together with two vehicles, of 'Jackson' of Southwold by 'Shreeve' of Lowestoft in 1968.

A small number of independent operators still provide stage services wholly or in part in East Suffolk, although they are much less well established than in West Suffolk. With the aid of information published in the news sheets of the omnibus enthusiast societies; The PSV Circle and The Omnibus Society, a comparison has been made between the organisation and structure of the independent operators and ECOC operation in East Suffolk.

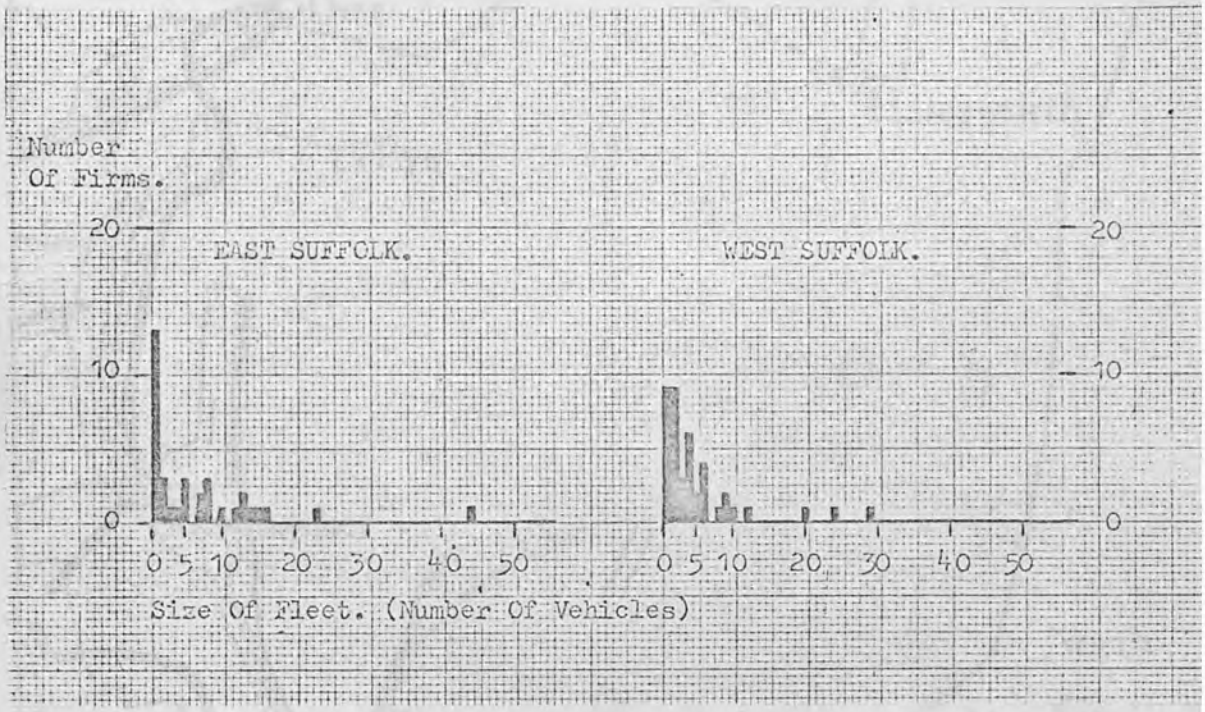
Stage-Carriage Operation By Independent Operators in East Suffolk.

In 1969, the last year for which comprehensive figures are available, there were five independent operators of stage-carriage services in East Suffolk and an additional 36 concerns operating public service vehicles on excursions, tours, express services or contract hire. In total the 41 concerns owned 206 vehicles, giving an average fleet size of 5·2 vehicles. In addition several independent operators with bases in West Suffolk had routes extending into East Suffolk, mainly to the towns of Ipswich and Stowmarket. The graph (fig.13.1, below) shows the size of each of the 41 East Suffolk operators, compared with the 34 operators based in West Suffolk.

Five of the East Suffolk operators owned 95 vehicles and the remaining 36 firms owned 120 vehicles. Seven of the nine one-vehicle concerns owned a mini-bus but none of these operated a stage service. The larger companies owning 20 or more vehicles were; 'A Soames' of Otley, north-east of Ipswich 20 vehicles, 'R O Simonds' of Botesdale

near Diss 29 vehicles, and 'B Shreeve' (Belle Coaches) of Lowestoft 24 vehicles. Although Simonds does operate a number of stage services, mainly in the Diss area, Soames and Shreeve use their vehicles on excursion, tour and contract hire work. Soames has contracts to provide transport for schoolchildren at two U.S. Air Force bases near Woodbridge. Several of the smaller companies rely on school contract work for regular year-round income (3*).

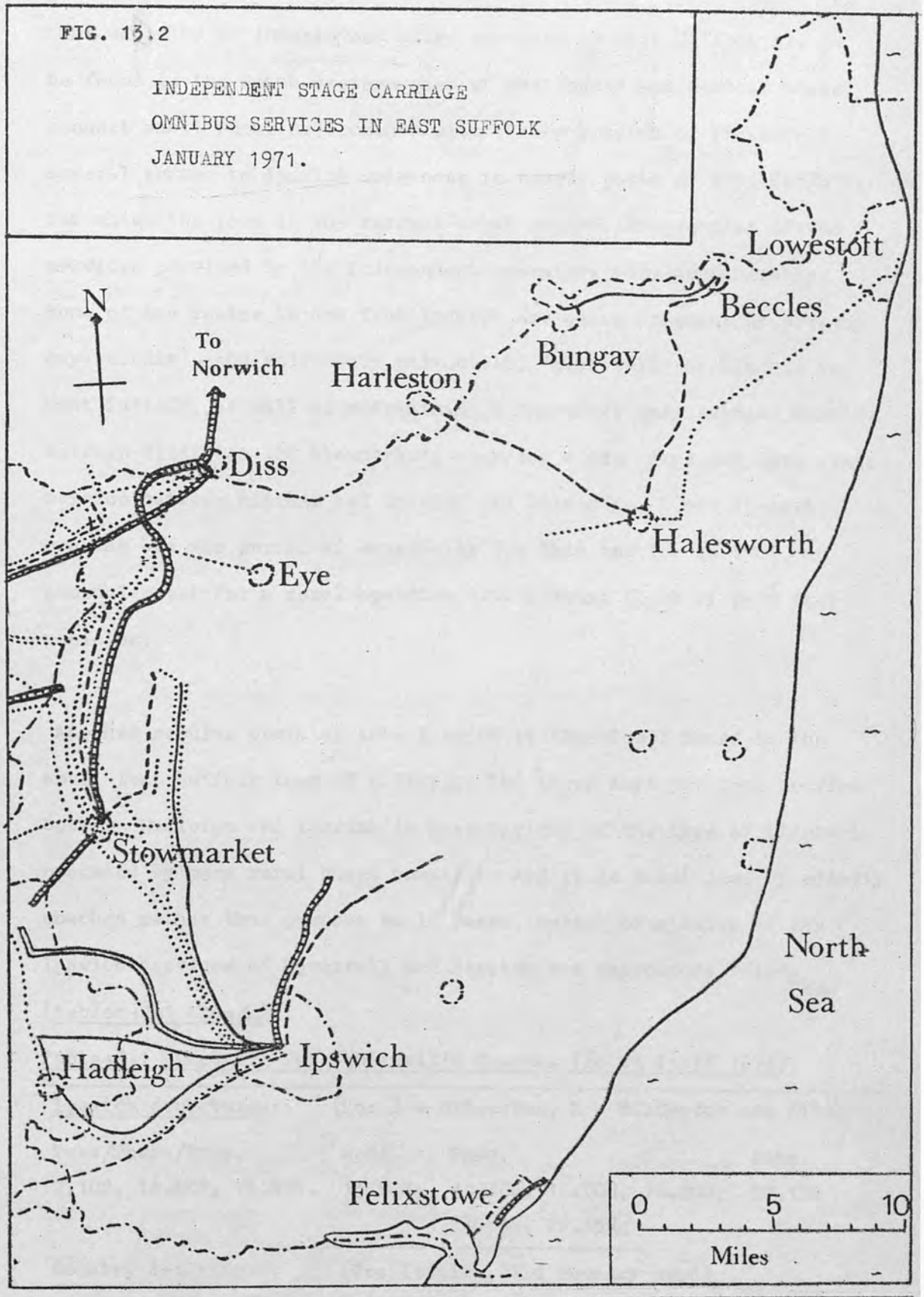
Fig 13.1 Numbers of Vehicles Owned By Independent Operators of East and West Suffolk. (4*)



Many of the independent operators in East Suffolk have their bases in rural areas and even town based concerns, such as Shreeve, have some vehicles stationed in nearby small towns and villages, following the acquisition of smaller companies. Shreeve has some vehicles permanently outstationed at Leiston and Saxmundham, mainly for school contracts. The map (Fig 13.2) shows the distribution of all licensed stage services operated by independent operators in East Suffolk, excluding express services.

FIG. 13.2

INDEPENDENT STAGE CARRIAGE
OMNIBUS SERVICES IN EAST SUFFOLK
JANUARY 1971.



KEY

Routes with Services:
..... 1 day per week
------ 2 days per week
——— 3 days per week
═══ 5 days per week
═══ 6 days per week

-·-·-·- Administrative Boundary

Routes Using Same Roads are Shown Separately

The majority of independent stage services in East Suffolk are to be found in the south-western part of the county and most of these connect small rural settlements with either Ipswich or Stowmarket. Several routes to Ipswich originate in nearby parts of West Suffolk, for which the town is the nearest urban centre. Frequencies of the services provided by the independent operators vary considerably. Some of the routes to and from Ipswich are quite frequent by present day standards and moderately patronised. 'Squirrell' of Hitcham in West Suffolk, as well as maintaining a Thursdays only express service between Bildeston and Stowmarket, operates a six days per week stage service between Hitcham and Ipswich via Bildeston. A new 45-seat one-man bus was purchased especially for this service in 1969, an unusual event for a rural operator with a total fleet of only four vehicles.

Another regular operator into Ipswich is 'Beeston', based in the small West Suffolk town of Hadleigh. The three days per week service between Hadleigh and Ipswich is more typical of the type of timetable operated by many rural based companies and it is maintained by elderly coaches rather than purpose built buses. Recent timetables of the Ipswich services of Squirrell and Beeston are reproduced below, (tables 13.1 and 13.2).

Table 13.1 Timetable for Squirrell's Coaches (As at April 1972).

Ipswich departures:	(To: B = Bildeston, H = Bildeston and Hitcham)		
Tues/Thurs/Fris.	Weds.	Sats.	Suns.
12.10B, 14.40B, 16.45H.	13.00H.	11.40H, 14.00B, 16.20B, 17.55H, 22.15H.	22.15H
Country departures:	**(To: Ipswich, Old Foundry Road)**		
Tues/Thurs/Fris.	Weds.	Sats.	Suns.
09.00H, 13.05B, 15.55H.	09.00H.	09.00H, 12.50H, 14.35B 17.05B, 21.20H.	17.15H

(Journey time 45 - 50 minutes.)

Table 13.2.

Timetable for Beeston's Coaches (As at 6th. September 1971).

Ipswich - Hadleigh.	Tuesdays/Thursdays/Saturdays.						
Hadleigh	09.00		N.S.	Ipswich	12.15	15.00	17.30
Kersey	09.10	13.15		Whatfield	13.00	15.40	18.15
Whatfield	09.30	13.25	16.35	Kersey	15.10		18.25
Ipswich	11.05	14.05	17.20	Hadleigh		N.S.	18.30

(N.S. = Not Saturdays)

Features of both the two timetables which are typical of rural operation include; the variation in numbers of journeys operated on different weekdays - more trips being run on Ipswich market days and less on Ipswich early closing day, and the long waiting periods in Ipswich before the vehicles and drivers make their return trips to the country, resulting in under-utilisation of both.

Other West Suffolk operators with routes into Ipswich include 'Partridge' of Hadleigh, on three days per week and 'Norfolk' of Nayland, on two days per week. There has been a steady decline in the number of independent stage routes centred on Ipswich since the peak period in the early 1950s. In 1951 there were 13 independent operators running 14 routes to and from the town (5*). By 1957 the numbers had declined to 7 operators of eight routes (6*), indicating that the early post-war boom in public transport was over quite early in this area.

There have been several recent withdrawals of independent routes in the Ipswich area, including the extremely infrequent service which formerly offered the only alternative form of public transport to the East Suffolk railway for travellers between Ipswich and Halesworth. One of the remaining independent services, operated by 'Soames' between Ipswich and the village of Charsfield, to the north-east, was making a heavy loss in 1971 and the operator stated that it would not

be possible to maintain it for much longer (7*).

Other independent operators with stage services in southern East Suffolk include 'Braybrooke' of Mendlesham, who held six stage licences in 1971 (8*). Three of these services run on Tuesdays only, one on Thursdays only and two on Thursdays and Saturdays and there are no stage operations by the concern on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. 'Bickers' of Coddenham operates infrequent services between Brockford and Ipswich, Brockford and Stowmarket and Otley and Ipswich. A feature common to all the routes operated by independents in East Suffolk is that they connect relatively small rural settlements to towns and none of them connect two medium or large towns, except for the rail replacement service between Stowmarket and Norwich operated jointly by 'Simonds', 'Cullings Motor Services' of Norwich and the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company.

It is clear from fig13.2 that there are very few independent stage routes east of a line drawn between Ipswich and Diss. The only significant centre of independemt stage operation in the north-east of the county is Halesworth. Until 1971 the local operator was 'C E Naylor' (Halesworth Blue Buses), who ran a number of typically rural services in addition to school contracts. Falling revenue brought about severe cutbacks in the late 1960s, including the withdrawal of the fortnightly return journey to Ipswich. At the end of 1971 Naylor sold his entire business to a nearby operator, 'Fosdyke' of Bramfield, a company less dependent than Naylor was on revenue from stage services. The Naylor vehicle fleet was a stereotype of that which has been common to many of the poorer rural independents. It consisted entirely of old second-hand vehicles, including one double-deck bus, which was often used on the Friday service between Halesworth and Lowestoft. In November 1969 the average age of the eight vehicles

then owned by Naylor was 16 years, the oldest dating from 1948 and the newest from 1957 (4*). This was the result of insufficient capital to enable the purchse of newer vehicles.

The only stage service provided by an independent operator in East Suffolk of an urban nature in 1970 was the weekdays route between Felixstowe railway station and the ferry accross the mouth of the River Deben, two miles north of the town centre, to Bawdsey. The operator, 'Aldis', had two vehicles in 1969 and was involved in no activities other than this one service.

The largest independent operator based in East Suffolk is 'R C Simonds' of Botesdale near Diss, although most of the company's routes are in West Suffolk and Norfolk. The most frequent service is operated each weekday between Diss and Bury St. Edmunds via Botesdale and Ixworth. As well as two local services in Diss the company is the principal operator of the Stowmarket - Diss - Norwich rail replacement service. In November 1969 Simond's fleet was composed of 22 coaches, 3 single-deck buses, 3 double-deck buses and one mini-bus. The double-deck vehicles are now usually to be found on the Diss to Bury service, which seems to be quite well patronised and sometimes requires relief vehicles at peak periods. Eight of Simond's 29 vehicles were bought new and the average age of the fleet in 1969 was 9 years, but no vehicle was more than 14 years old. Simonds operates extensive excursion, private-hire and contract-hire services in addition to the stage-carriage routes and the diversification of interests has enabled the company to survive the decline in stage patronage better than some of the smaller and less diversified rural operators, who have been unable to cross-subsidise their uneconomic routes.

So, the independemt omnibus operators of East Suffolk have many of the

features typical of small concerns throughout Britain. Some of them have a few infrequent stage services but in most cases the profits come from other activities, such as private and contract hire, or garages. In many ways the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company's operations in East Suffolk are typical of most National Bus Company subsidiaries in England and Wales and these are examined now.

Eastern Counties Omnibus Company Services in East Suffolk.

Most rural bus services in East Suffolk are provided by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company. The company also serves a wide area of East Anglia, including almost all the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. Urban services provide the main field of activity, particularly in the cities of Norwich, Cambridge and Peterborough, where there are no local authority public transport services. However the two largest municipalities in East Suffolk both have their own systems and, although the company operates about half the town services in Lowestoft, Ipswich Corporation has almost complete control of bus routes within its administrative area. Consequently the majority of ECOC bus services in East Suffolk are rural or inter-urban in character. Inter-urban services are limited by the fact that urban centres are few and widely spaced. The only true inter-urban routes in the county are between Ipswich and Felixstowe, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth (Norfolk) and Ipswich and Colchester (Essex), the last named operated jointly with the Eastern National Omnibus Company, another National Bus Company subsidiary.

Since the early 1960s the total ECOC fleet of buses and coaches has numbered between about 700 and 750 vehicles, with fluctuations between summer and winter seasons but little overall change from year to year. Although there has been a reduction in the number of rural routes in recent years the fleet strength of 675 vehicles in February

1972 (9*) was only slightly less than the 726 vehicles owned in June 1962. Over the ten year period 1962 - 1972 the number of routes operated and the number of passengers carried have both declined much faster than the number of vehicles owned (10*). The decline in the number of passengers carried has been dramatic, as shown in the following table.

Table 13.3 Passengers Carried on ECOC Bus Services. All Routes.

(Note: vehicles owned 1962 726, 1972 675 a decline of 9%)

Year	Passengers	Change
1952	132 million	-
1960	107 million	19% decrease from 1952
1969	83 million	22% decrease from 1960

Various maps have been compiled to show details of the pattern of operation of ECOC stage services in East Suffolk. Bus frequency maps are based on the information contained in the company's timetable booklets (figs 13.3 to 13.7). They show the number of buses negotiating roads in each direction, so that where more than one route serves a section of road the totals are combined. In the vast majority of cases flows in each direction were found to be the same so the total of buses using the roads in the time periods indicated is double that shown. On some routes weekday services, like those for many independent operators, vary from day to day, and where this is so the most often recurring figure has been used (fig 13.3 and 13.5).

The maps show clearly the main lines of communication in East Suffolk. The more frequent services are closely related to the urban centres and are mostly of the semi-urban or inter-urban type, serving dormitory suburban villages or following direct routes between towns along A and B class roads. These same routes are prominent on the map of Sunday services (fig 13.6) and the map of journeys after 20.00 hrs. on weekdays (fig 13.7).

Many routes radiate from the two main urban centres. This is most noticeable around Ipswich, where there are regular services to and from Stowmarket, Woodbridge, Felixstowe and Colchester, as well as several very infrequent routes serving sparsely populated rural districts, mainly to the north of the town. Rural routes are less in evidence to the west of Ipswich owing to the greater participation by independent operators in the provision of services in that area. The rural routes north of Ipswich all have frequencies of less than ten trips each way per weekday and many of them have less than five journeys per day.

The second centre of ECOC routes in East Suffolk is Lowestoft. Most of the town's external bus routes are inter-urban in character or almost so, and the town's isolated physical position has restricted the development of a radial pattern of routes similar to that found around many inland towns.

Although the network of rural routes north of Ipswich appears to be fairly dense on the map, some of them run on only one or two days each week so do not provide regular or convenient communications. Several of these routes were severely curtailed in 1970, as may be seen from a comparison of fig.13.3 and fig.13.5 . Other parts of the network have disappeared since 1971, following the rejection of some of the ECOC applications to the county council for grant aid. One of the results of withdrawals during the 1970s is that there is now no ECOC link between the Ipswich and Lowestoft groups of routes, although the twice daily year round 'Grey-Green' (George Ewer) limited-stop service still connects the two towns (ECOC participates in this service in the summer months when it is known as the 'East Anglian Express').

FIG. 13.3

EASTERN COUNTIES OMNIBUS COMPANY

DISTRIBUTION OF ROUTES IN EAST SUFFOLK

WEEKDAY SERVICES. NOVEMBER 1970

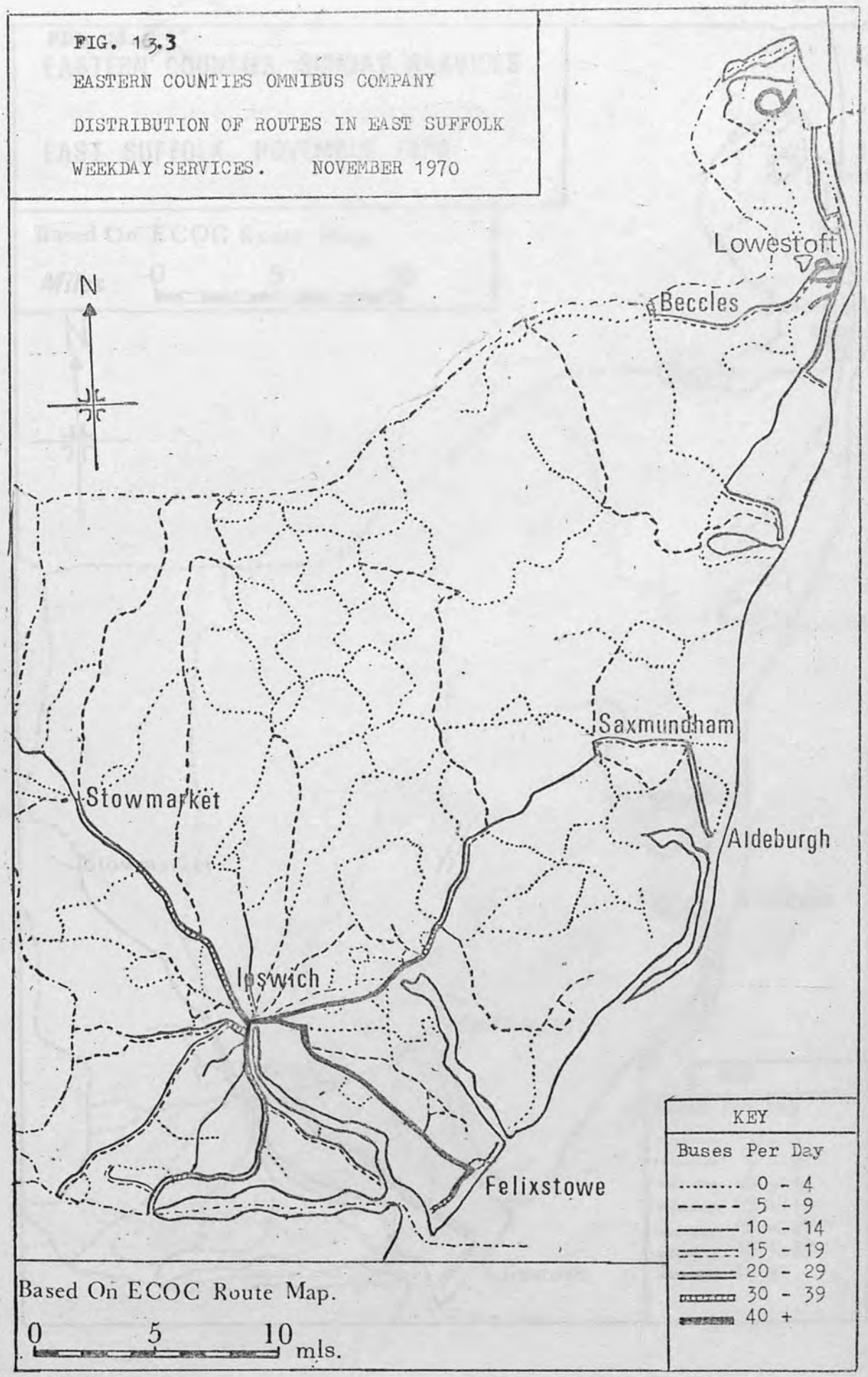


FIG. 13.4
EASTERN COUNTIES SUNDAY SERVICES

EAST SUFFOLK NOVEMBER 1970

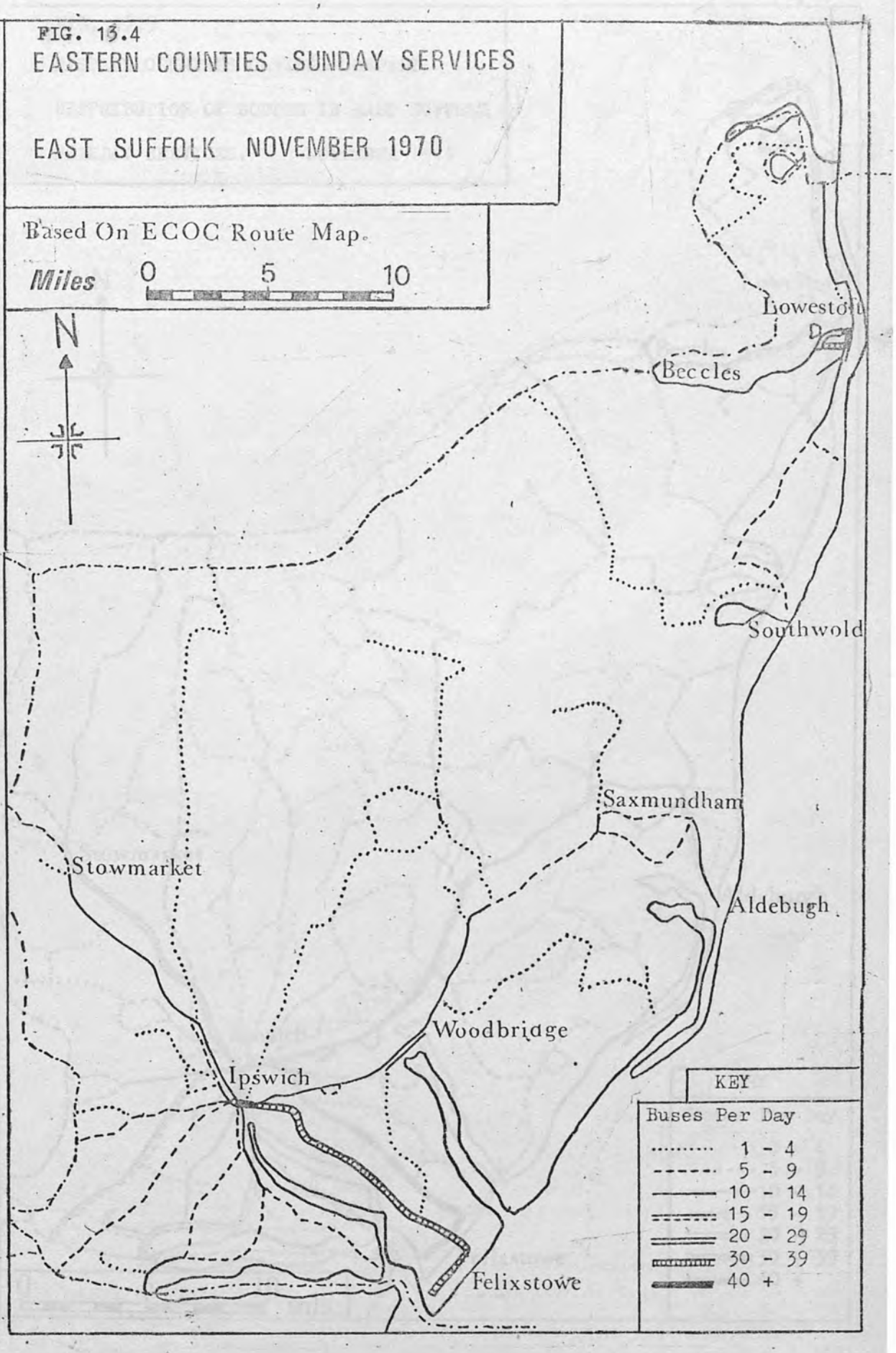


FIG. 13.5

EASTERN COUNTIES OMNIBUS COMPANY

DISTRIBUTION OF ROUTES IN EAST SUFFOLK

WEEKDAY SERVICES. NOVEMBER 1971

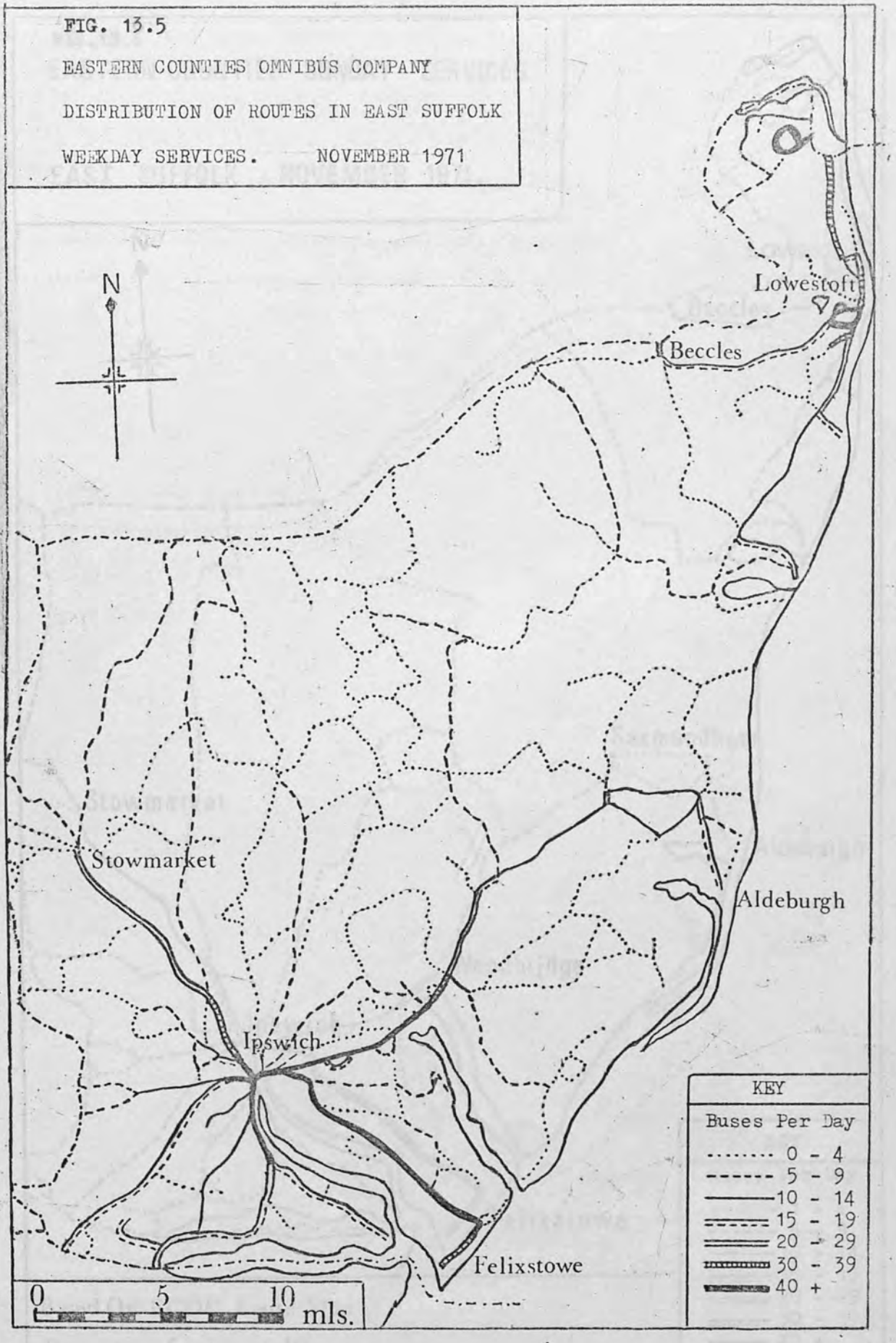


FIG.13.6

EASTERN COUNTIES SUNDAY SERVICES

EAST SUFFOLK NOVEMBER 1971.

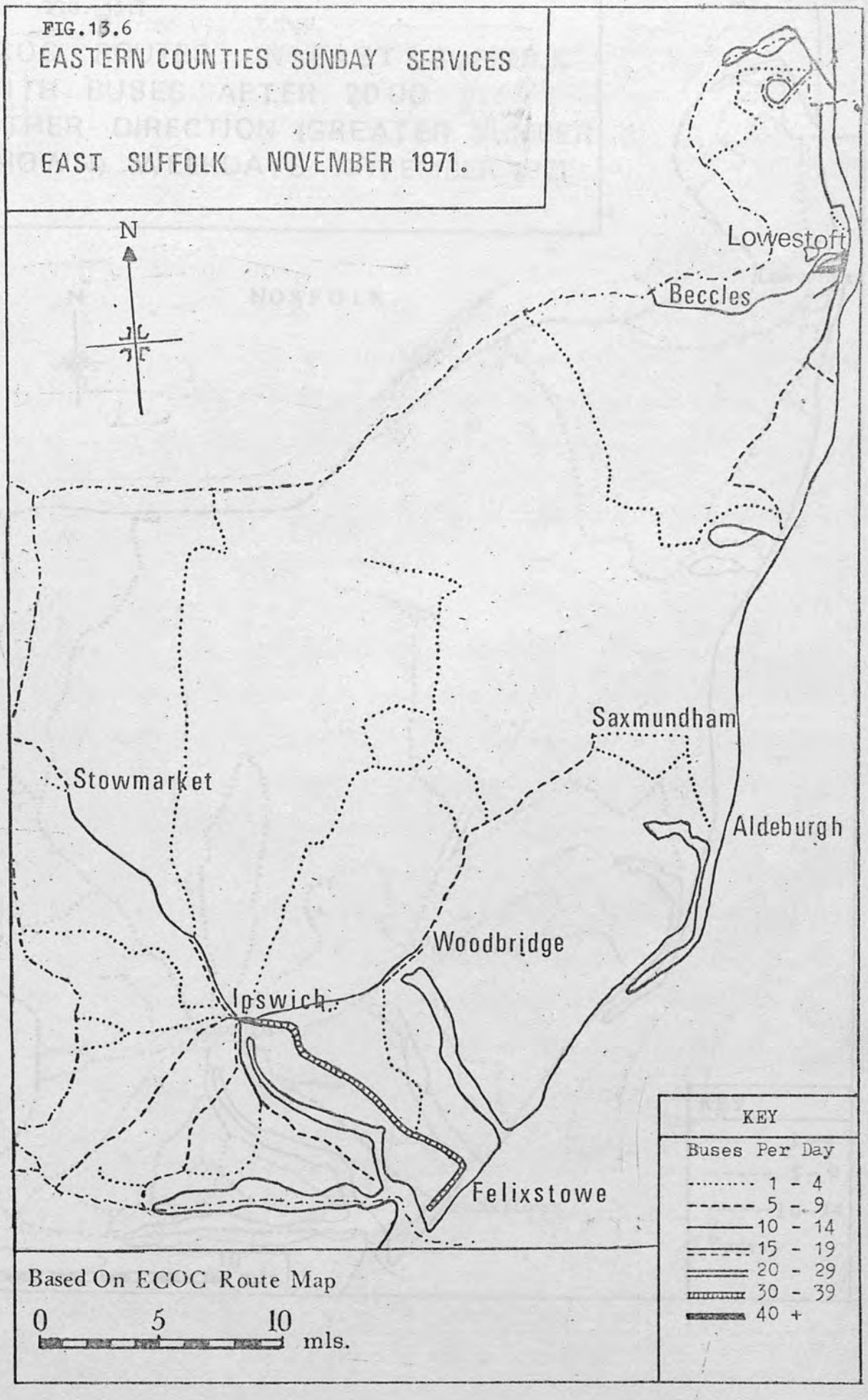
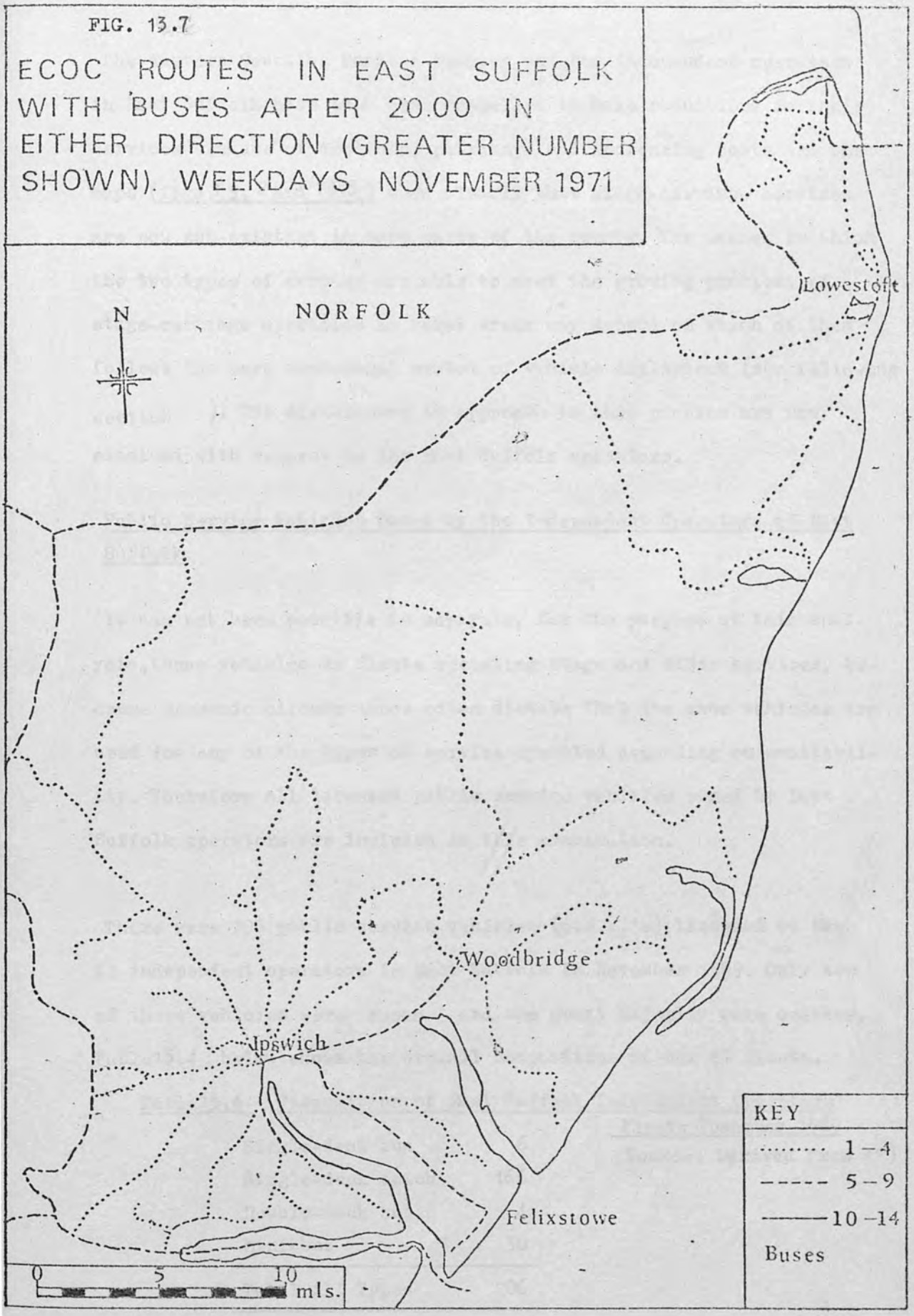


FIG. 13.7

ECOC ROUTES IN EAST SUFFOLK WITH BUSES AFTER 20.00 IN EITHER DIRECTION (GREATER NUMBER SHOWN). WEEKDAYS NOVEMBER 1971



The Eastern Counties Omnibus Company and the independent operators in East Suffolk have each been compelled to make reductions in their services because of declining patronage and increasing costs and the maps (figs.13.2 and 13.5) show clearly that stage-carriage services are now non-existant in some parts of the county. The manner in which the two types of company are able to meet the growing problems of stage-carriage operation in rural areas may depend on which of them follows the more economical system of vehicle deployment (see following section). The differences in approach to this problem are now examined with respect to the East Suffolk operators.

Public Service Vehicles Owned by the Independent Operators of East Suffolk.

It has not been possible to separate, for the purpose of this analysis, those vehicles in fleets operating stage and other services, because economic circumstances often dictate that the same vehicles are used for any of the types of service operated depending on availability. Therefore all licensed public service vehicles owned by East Suffolk operators are included in this examination.

There were 206 public service vehicles (p.s.v.'s) licensed to the 41 independent operators in East Suffolk in November 1969. Only ten of these vehicles were buses and the great majority were coaches. Table13.4 below shows the overall composition of the 41 fleets.

Table13.4 Composition of East Suffolk Independent Operators' Fleets November 1969.
(Source: Derived from 4*)

Single-deck bus	6
Single-deck coach	166
Double-deck bus	4
Mini-bus	30
Total All Types	206

Public Service Vehicles Owned by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company Based in East Suffolk.

In contrast to the policy followed by most of the independent operators the majority of vehicles stationed by ECOC in East Suffolk are standard buses, although there are a few coaches. The total number of vehicles allocated to the four main garages in the county and their outstations has shown little change over the last decade. Summer totals have been in the range 143 - 149 vehicles and winter totals have varied between 119 and 127 vehicles, although the winter 1971 - 72 allocation showed a decline to 110 vehicles, owing largely to the sharp decrease in the number of vehicles allocated to Ipswich following the withdrawal of a number of uneconomic rural routes in the area. Details of the numbers and types of vehicles allocated to the East Suffolk garages are shown in fig 13.10 and Appendix 1 .

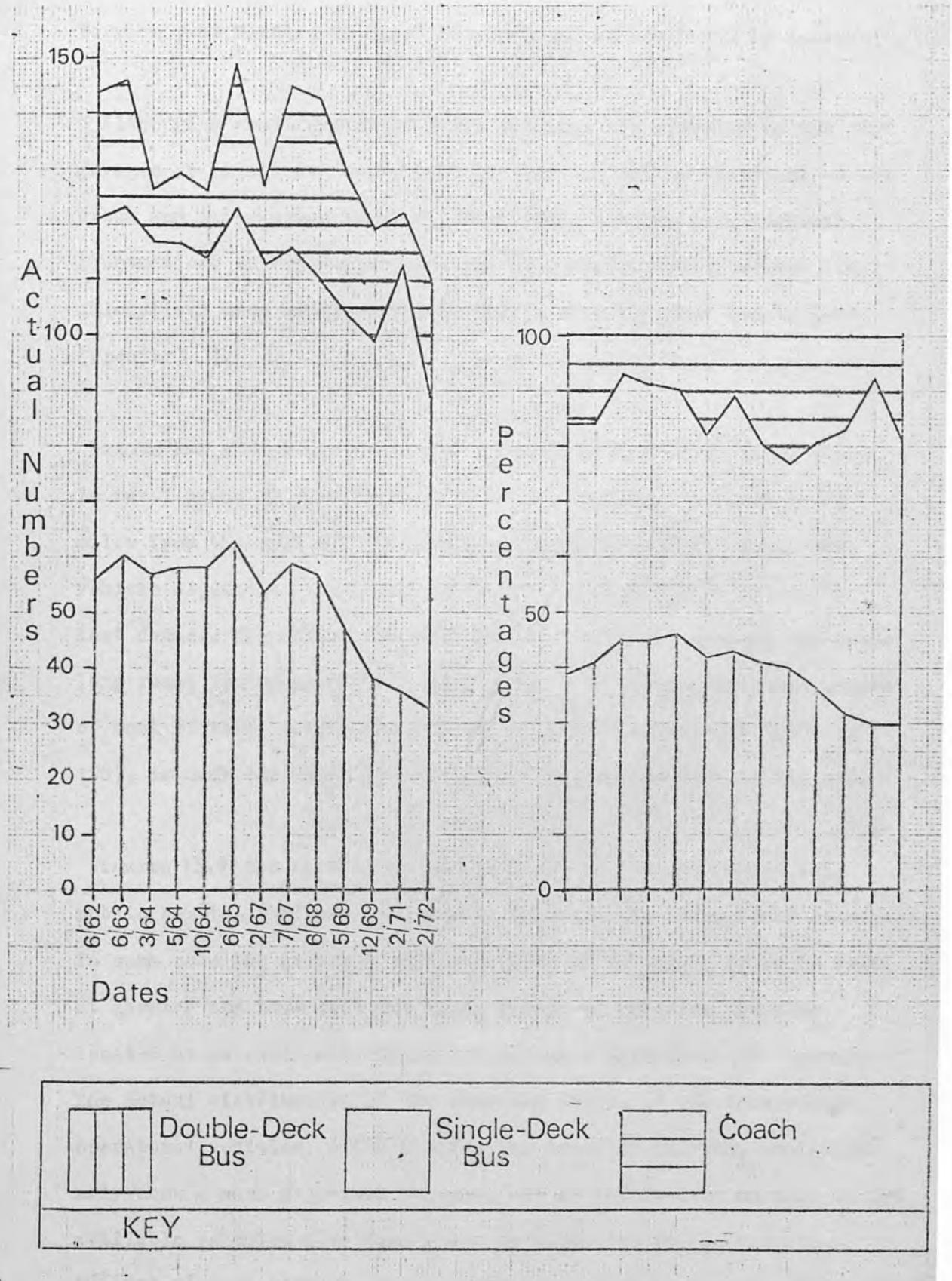
The vehicle allocation at Ipswich has been declining for a number of years, mainly because of the contraction in rural services. Part of the decline is accounted for by reductions in the allocations to outstations, as shown in table 13.5 below.

Table 13.5 Allocation of Vehicles to Outstations of Ipswich Garage.

	At 12/64	At 8/68	At 8/70
Bawdsey	1	1	1
Boyton	1	1	0
Debenham	4	3	4
East Bergholt	9	7	4
Eye	1	1	1
Framlingham	2	1	2
Hadleigh (West Suffolk)	3	3	2
Stowmarket	4	3	4
Stradbroke	3	3	3
Sudbury (West Suffolk)	2	1	1
Woodbridge	5	4	5
TOTAL	35	28	27

(Source: PSV Circle Newsheets E300, E360, E368).

Fig 13.8 Eastern Counties Omnibus Company. Allocation of Vehicles To Garages in East Suffolk 1962 - 1972.



The other principal ECOC garages in East Suffolk are at Lowestoft, Felixstowe and Saxmundham. As well as the outstations controlled by Ipswich there are oustations at Bungay and Halesworth controlled by Norwich , at Beccles by Great Yarmouth and at Southwold by Lowestoft.

Although a small number of rural services are operated by the ECOC garages at Lowestoft and Felixstowe they are not as important as the urban and inter-urban services. Both these garages have seasonal fluctuations in the number and type of vehicles allocated but total allocations have remained fairly stable over the last decade (see Appendix 1).

Saxmundham garage has operating conditions typical of those found in rural areas in many parts of Britain. Although the town is 18 miles from the next ECOC garages, at Ipswich and Felixstowe, its vehicle allocation has never been above single figures during the last decade. The small number of vehicles required to work the quite long rural routes around the town reflect the very infrequent nature of most of them. Saxmundham itself, with a population of 1,600 in 1967, is much too small to have any urban bus services of its own.

Figures 13.9 and 13.10 show the locations of the garages of all public service vehicles operated by ECOC and the independent companies. In each case the greatest concentrations of vehicles are to be found at Ipswich and Lowestoft but small groups of vehicles are also located at several small towns and villages throughout the county. The actual distribution of the stabling points of the independent operators' vehicles, often outside the homes of drivers, would probably show a more dispersed pattern, but as information on this is not available vehicles have been shown as allocated to the registered offices of each company. Larger companies, such as Shreeve of Lowestoft,

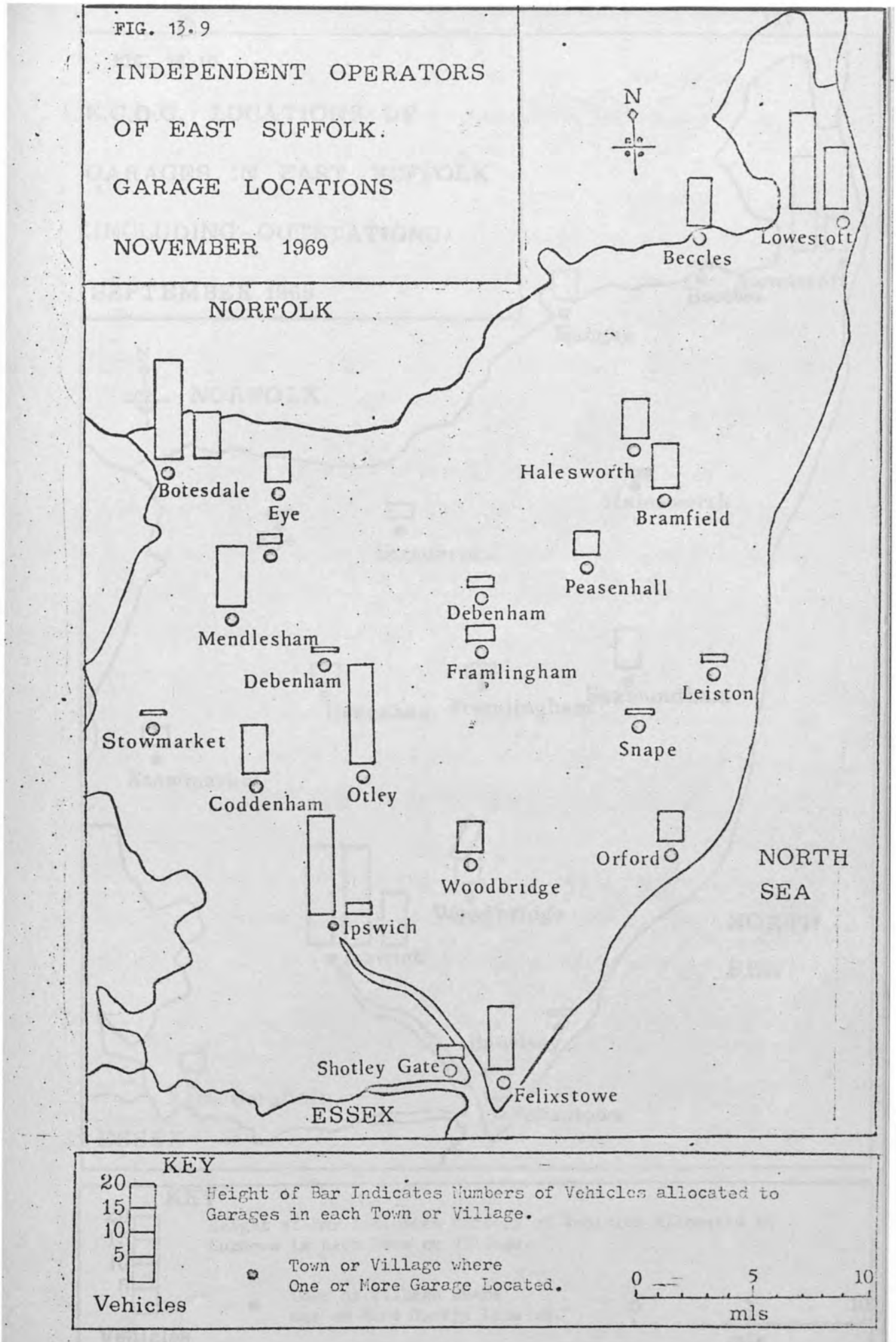
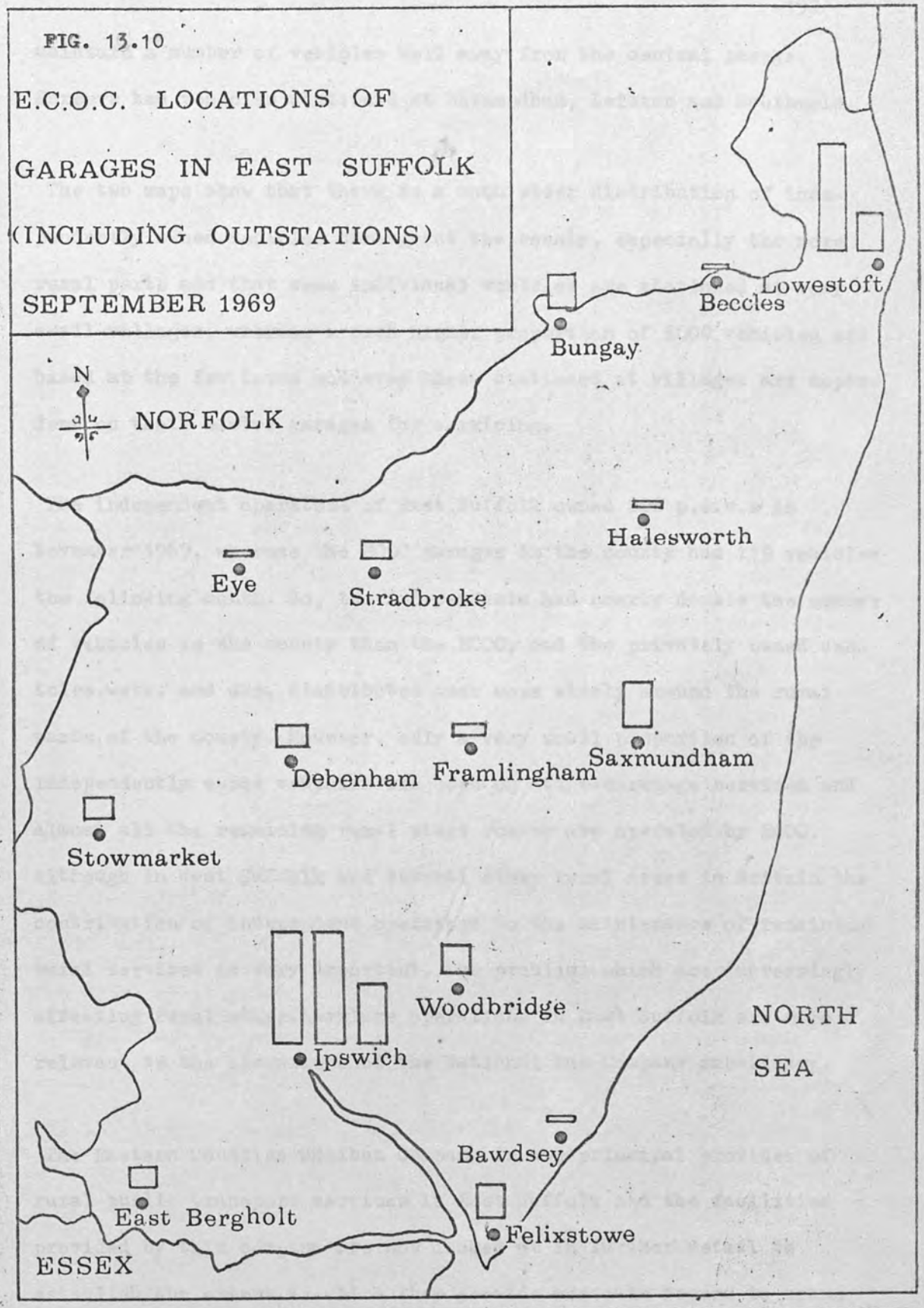


FIG. 13.9
INDEPENDENT OPERATORS
OF EAST SUFFOLK.
GARAGE LOCATIONS
NOVEMBER 1969
N
NORFOLK
Beccles
Lowestoft
Botesdale
Eye
Halesworth
Bramfield
Peasenhall
Debenham
Framlingham
Mendlesham
Debenham
Leiston
Stowmarket
Snape
Coddenham
Otley
Orford
NORTH
SEA
Woodbridge
Ipswich
Shotley Gate
Felixstowe
ESSEX
KEY
20
15
10
5
Vehicles
Height of Bar Indicates Numbers of Vehicles allocated to Garages in each Town or Village.
Town or Village where One or More Garage Located.
0
5
10
mls

FIG. 13.10

E.C.O.C. LOCATIONS OF GARAGES IN EAST SUFFOLK (INCLUDING OUTSTATIONS)

SEPTEMBER 1969



KEY

20
15
10
5
Vehicles

Height of Bar Indicates Numbers of Vehicles allocated to Garages in each Town or Village.

Town or Village where One or More Garage Located.

0 5 10
mls

maintain a number of vehicles well away from the central garage. Shreeve has vehicles stationed at Saxmundham, Leiston and Southwold.

The two maps show that there is a much wider distribution of independently owned vehicles throughout the county, especially the more rural parts and that some individual vehicles are stationed at very small villages, whereas a much higher proportion of ECOC vehicles are based at the few towns and even those stationed at villages are dependent on their master garages for servicing.

The independent operators of East Suffolk owned 206 p.s.v.s in November 1969, whereas the ECOC garages in the county had 119 vehicles the following month. So, the independents had nearly double the number of vehicles in the county than the ECOC, and the privately owned vehicles were, and are, distributed much more widely around the rural parts of the county. However, only a very small proportion of the independently owned vehicles are used on stage-carriage services and almost all the remaining rural stage routes are operated by ECOC. Although in West Suffolk and several other rural areas in Britain the contribution of independent operators to the maintenance of remaining rural services is very important, the problems which are increasingly affecting rural stage-carriage operations in East Suffolk are more relevant to the operations of the National Bus Company subsidiary.

The Eastern Counties Omnibus Company is the principal provider of rural public transport services in East Suffolk and the facilities provided by this company are now looked at in further detail to establish the extent to which they provide adequate access to urban centres from the county's rural expanses.

Access To Towns by Public Transport In East Suffolk.

The Steering Group survey of rural public transport in West Suffolk found that the remaining rural public transport facilities were used predominantly by housewives, as a means of visiting shopping centres in nearby towns (see Chapter 12) and to a lesser extent for journeys to work and entertainments. In the past many rural operators in East Anglia and elsewhere have tended to try to provide facilities within easy reach of as much of the rural population in their operating areas as possible but this population is widely dispersed and can be served only by meandering routes, which entail much longer journey times than if more direct routes were followed. Hibbs (1*) states that the lengthening of journeys by deviations has been one of the principal reasons for the decline in patronage of rural bus services. Several such meandering routes are operated by ECOC in East Suffolk and they provide the principal means of access to market towns by public transport for a large part of the county's rural community.

The large scale withdrawals of rural ECOC services in the last few years has already been noted in this study (Chapter 12). The remaining services are operated in as economical a manner as possible, with virtually all of them being served by small single-deck one-man operated vehicles. No mini-buses have ever been owned by the company and it has never supported the suggestion that they would be more economical than standard vehicles on sparsely patronised rural routes.

The 1968 Transport Act recognised that the retention of a minimum standard of rural public transport to serve residual needs, such as housewife shoppers, was a necessity. Indeed such a policy had been advocated for a number of years by independent studies of rural transport problems (11,12,13*). The extent to which ECOC adequately

provides access from the ruralareas of East Suffolk to at least one town is shown on the map (fig 13.11). The map is based on the Summer 1971 timetable issued by the company and all routes operated in the county at that time are included. Seven towns outside East Suffolk are the nearest urban centres to some parts of rural East Suffolk and there are 13 urban centres shown within East Suffolk itself. A population of 2000 has been taken as the base level for a community to be included as a central place offering a range of services great enough to provide attractions of sufficient magnitude to the inhabitants of nearby rural districts to make it a focal point for its region . The population figure of 2000 is of course an arbitrary one but it is not the place of this study to enter into the wider argument of what parameters should be used when defining a central place. One or two exceptions have been made to the general 2000 population rule for good reasons. Saxmundham Urban District had a population of only 1700 at the 1971 census but the town has been included because it is an important communications centre and also the parish of Kelsale, with a population of more than 1000, adjoins the town to form a continuously built-up area. Conversely a few villages with populations in excess of 2000 have not been included, because they are situated very close to large towns, on which they rely for most service functions. Excluded for this reason are Kesgrave and Rushmere near Ipswich , Trimley near Felixstowe and Carlton Colville near Lowestoft.

The areas shaded on the accessibility map are those which are more than 30 minutes travelling time from the nearest town centre, assuming that bus passengers will walk to their nearest bus stopping point at a speed of 4 m.p.h. and catch a bus immediately. So, residents of the shaded areas would require more than one hours total travelling time for each visit made to the nearest town by public transport.

A few rural areas, particularly to the north-east of Ipswich, are within 30 minutes travelling time of more than one of the towns but there are also several parts of the county which are remote from all towns in both distance and time by public transport. The largest such area is the approximately 90 square miles in the north-west of the county between Framlingham, Diss and Stowmarket. If the accessibility map is related to the maps of route frequencies (figs.13.3 to 13.7) then it is evident that large parts of the county are not only remote from urban influence in distance and time but are also served by very infrequent public transport services, if any. Almost all the surviving bus routes in the north-west of the county have only a handfull of journeys in each direction each week.

So, although the ECOC route network extends over most of rural East Suffolk, many of the surviving routes have very low frequencies and are slow and circuitous. A few rural railway stations and independent stage-carriage services exist in the areas not covered by ECOC but in many of the more isolated communities the car, or for those on low incomes, the bicycle or moped, are the only available modes of transport for those wishing to undertake medium and long distance journeys.

Conclusion.

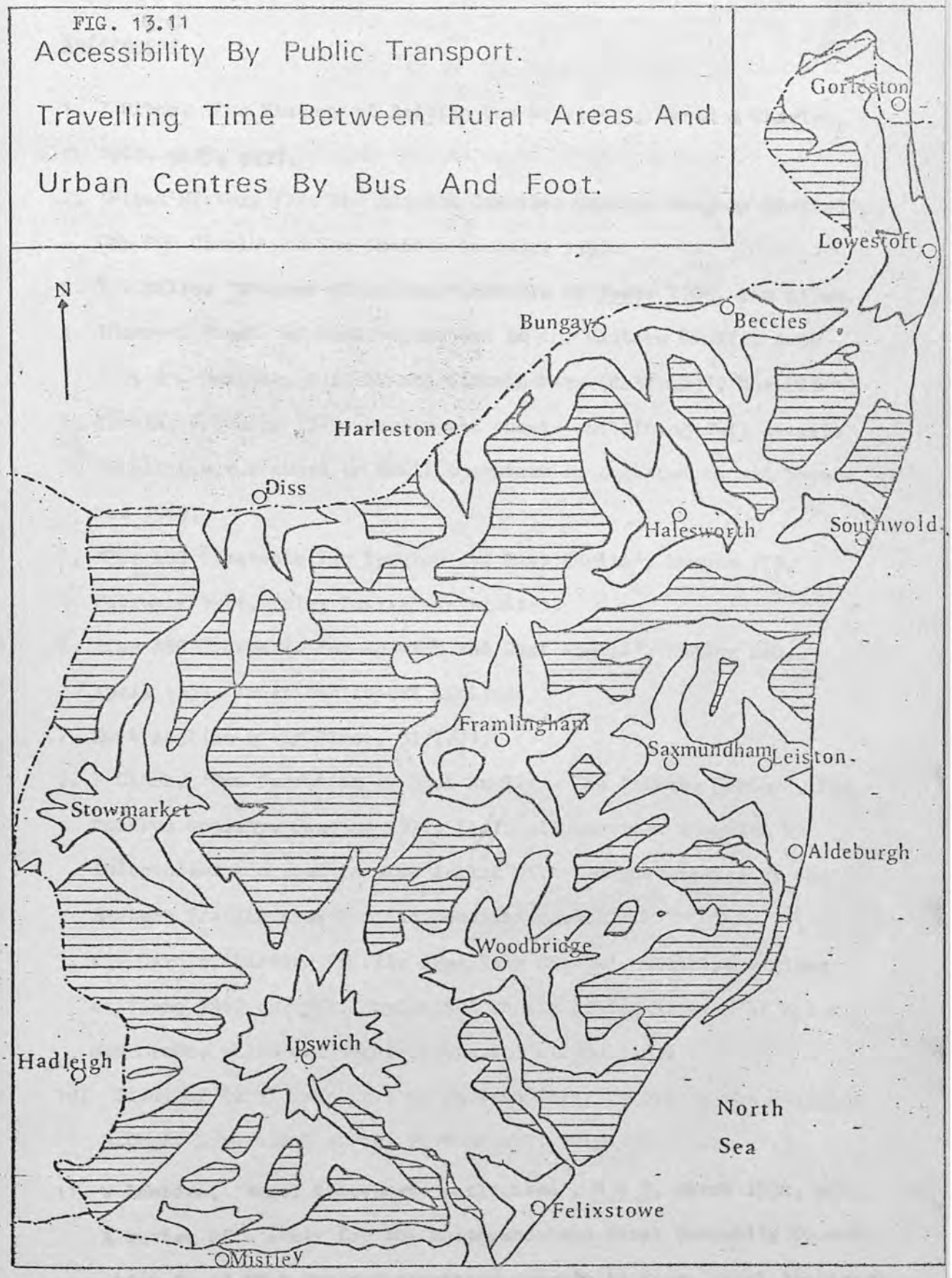
The major problem now affecting the provision of public transport facilities in the rural parts of East Suffolk is how even a very basic route network for those members of the rural communities who cannot or do not wish to own a private vehicle, can be maintained in the face of the very severe financial difficulties which inflation and declining passenger demand have brought about in recent years. Although inhabitants of many parts of the county still have access to at least a skeleton bus service within a few miles, recent widespread withdrawals have underlined the fact that the provision of meaningfull public transport facilities for the county's rural population will continue

to present serious problems for the county's local authorities and bus operators for many years to come.

FIG. 13.11

Accessibility By Public Transport.

Travelling Time Between Rural Areas And Urban Centres By Bus And Foot.



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9. PSV Circle,'Eastern Traffic Area News Sheets', monthly, various editions 1962 onwards. Duplicated sheets giving details of p.s.v. movements, sales and acquisitions and allocations.

10. 'Study of Rural Transport in West Suffolk, Report by the Steering Group', Department of the Environment, July 1971, para. 2.2.

11. W Lambden, 'Rural Transport Spotlighted', B & C, March 1958, p82. A review of a study for the Northumberland Rural Community Council, which found that "unless something drastic is done, rural transport in mid-Northumberland will collapse completely within a few years time".

12. R Iles, 'What Future the Rural Bus', B & C, September 1966, p309. "Both from the point of view of the large and small operator, a skeleton type of service...may eventually prove to be the only service which can be run without some form of subsidy".

13. G Clayton and J Rees, 'The Economic Problems of Rural Transport in Wales', University of Wales Press, 1967. "The current policy is to accept the private car's inevitable domination of the rural transport scene and to ensure that ways and means are found of meeting the residual needs of such groups as the old, the young, the poor and the infirm."

SECTION 4: Problems of Urban Omnibus Provision.

CHAPTER 14.

The Post War Development of Urban Omnibus Services in Britain, With Particular Reference to East Suffolk.

Throughout the 1930s, 1940s and into the 1950s the motor omnibus provided the principal means of road passenger transport in most of Britain's medium and large towns and the only significant competitor was the bicycle. Bicycles were common in smaller towns where the distances to be traversed were small and in towns where the terrain is relatively flat. The towns of East Suffolk have both of these characteristics. C D Harris, in his 1942 study of Ipswich (1*) noticed that:

"Fortunately for the traffic problem, most people use either buses or bicycles, both of which are more efficient than private passenger cars in the use of road space".

Buses were well used, not only because cars were in short supply, but also because fares had traditionally remained very low. So, when a small decline in passenger demand occured in the early 1950s, low profit margins quickly began to cause economic problems for many municipalities, resulting in the first of a long series of fare increases. The Eastern Counties Omnibus Company was the first operator in Britain to apply what Hibbs termed a 'blanket' increase on all its fares (2*).

The decline in revenue from urban bus services became very serious in many British towns and cities during the middle and late 1950s. This led to many operators instituting regular fare increases to compensate for the losses caused by falling patronage and inflation in wage and maintenance costs. The municipal transport undertakings of East Suffolk, at Ipswich and Lowestoft, were amongst those which found mounting economic difficulties and both had recourse to a series

of fare increases to try and make ends meet.

In the early 1960s the problems affecting the provision of urban public transport began to receive a higher level of attention and a number of proposals were made both in the technical press and at a local level in several towns and cities. It was generally agreed that the principal problems were fourfold, namely :-

a) Congestion. Bus services were unable to keep to their timetables due to increasing traffic congestion from cars and larger goods vehicles. The unreliable bus services which resulted meant that short - distance potential passengers were more inclined to walk instead of waiting for the uncertain arrival of the next bus and longer distance travellers tended to use cars because they were more readily available and just as fast in congested conditions, without the added uncertainties of waiting for transport to arrive.

b) Urban Expansion. Existing routes were often closely related to the urban form present at the time when they were first introduced, mainly in the 1920s, and had frequently failed to keep pace with the development of new land uses and town expansion. As a result, developing passenger demand patterns were often not in line with the existing bus network inherited from the demand pattern of two decades or more earlier. Also, the expansion of towns by means of low density suburban housing estates to replace the high density terraced housing near the town centres meant that extensions beyond the outer termini of existing bus routes could not serve the more dispersed populations of the developing residential areas without following circuitous courses.

c) Rising Costs. Increases in the cost of petrol and staff wages had become frequent events and the low profit margins of most municipalities meant that each successive cost increase had to be immediately compensated for by an application to the Traffic Commissioners for an increase in fares to prevent a loss being made in the following year.

Fares increases frequently resulted in passenger resistance and a decline in passenger journeys as alternative forms of transport, especially the private car, became more attractive.

d) Demand Peaking. The gradual decline in public demand for bus services in the evenings, at weekends and mid-day, whilst demand had remained relatively stable at morning and afternoon peak periods, meant that, as it was necessary to retain staff and vehicles to meet the peak demands, there was an increasing excess in under-utilised capacity at other times.

Each of these four main areas of difficulty in the provision of public passenger transport facilities in urban areas has received attention from transport planners and economists in the past decade and each is now examined in more detail.

Congestion Problems.

There has been some conflict of opinion over the method by which the problems of urban traffic congestion can best be overcome. Some town planners have attempted to devise schemes to speed up the flow of road traffic of all types. Unfortunately cars have often tended to receive more attention than public transport in such cases and as a result buses could become less, rather than more convenient, due to longer routes caused by deviations to facilitate complicated traffic management schemes. However, as early as 1962 American experience was quoted to support the case for priority consideration to be given to helping public transport. An article in the British Transport Review of August 1962 (3*) claimed that special bus lanes had already found "widespread application in America, where there are now at least fifteen cities with special bus lanes, at least during peak hours". It was reported that 'before - and - after' studies had proved that

segregation was highly successful in speeding up not only public transport but also the general traffic flow .

Several British towns and cities began to experiment with traffic management schemes in the early 1960s in an attempt to combat congestion problems. However these schemes did not always aid public transport operators. An article in Bus and Coach for January 1963 (4*) expressed the fear that:

"If one-way schemes took buses more than two hundred yards from important passenger points, passengers were lost to public transport, perhaps for ever", and on the other hand:"When roads were closer together - say one hundred yards apart and the one-way scheme was long and narrow, the conditions were ideal".

In 1966 the Minister of Transport recognised that urgent action was necessary to lessen the effects of congestion on urban bus services. Speaking at the 1966 Public Transport Association Annual Dinner, Mrs Barbara Castle stated that:(5*)

"The most important thing was to give buses real and visible priority on city streets. I want buses to be allowed to move against the general traffic flow in one-way streets. I want more use of reserved lanes for buses".

A study of the passenger transport system of Leicester, published in 1967 (6*) found that an important factor in relieving urban congestion was to find a correct balance between investment in each of the alternative transport modes available, given that one form must be given priority over the others. The study proposed that buses be speeded up by the fitting of electronic devices which could influence traffic-lights in their favour.

One of the first British towns to introduce contra-flow bus lanes was Reading, in 1968 (7*). Following the success of the Reading scheme similar arrangements have been introduced in a number of other towns and cities, including London, Leeds and Runcorn. So far no public transport priority schemes have been introduced in the East Suffolk towns, although Ipswich, Lowestoft and several of the smaller towns have introduced one-way traffic systems to relieve congestion in narrow Nineteenth Century and earlier thoroughfares.

Problems Caused by Changes in Urban Form.

Before motorised personal transport became widely available it was necessary to provide living accommodation for most of the population of towns and cities as near as possible to the town centres, or public transport routes, to reduce travelling time to work or shops to a minimum. However, in the last half-century, and especially since 1950, the trend in accomodation construction has been towards the development of large expanses of relatively low density suburban housing estates. Only very infrequently have these estates been planned to harmonise with existing or projected public transport facilities. As a result municipal bus operators have usually had to extend their existing routes outwards in an haphazard and very unsatisfactory manner in attempts to retain public transport links between large parts of the suburban population, town centre and industrial areas.

The extension of long-standing bus routes to serve newly constructed suburban residential developments has been a feature of most expanding towns throughout Britain, including both Ipswich and Lowestoft. In both towns the route network has remained basically unaltered since the 1930s, except for some outward extensions at terminals and alterations to central area routing to conform with traffic management

schemes. In some towns the changes in demand patterns have been developing faster than in East Suffolk and several municipalities and company operators have found it necessary to introduce completely restructured route networks to meet the changing needs of the travelling public.

One of the first large scale route reorganisations was undertaken at Harrogate in 1961, where the West Yorkshire Road Car Company, a National Bus Company subsidiary operating all the town's services, concluded that the existing route network was no longer adequate (8*). The company found that existing routes did not take passengers near enough to the shopping centre, town centre terminal points were inconveniently placed and many routes did not take buses close enough to where people lived and worked. The main advantage of the complete reorganisation was claimed to be that: "a major and boldly conceived revision can be far better than a series of small adjustments which can confuse the public". Warrington Corporation undertook a complete recasting of its route network in 1960 (9*) as: "a determined effort to foster direct operation over the shortest distance" and to overcome anomalies which had arisen "because the original route conception became lost in frequent extensions dictated by the town's expansion". The Corporation estimated that the more efficient working which the reorganisation brought about would save at least £24,000 per year on working expenses.

Criticism has sometimes been levelled at public transport operators in urban areas that they have been slow to recognise changing patterns of passenger demand and have lacked the initiative to make bold changes in existing networks (10*). Where population has been rehoused or development has taken place on the perimeter of the built-up area a regular reassessment of traffic movement patterns is desirable. (11*, 12*)

Problems Caused By Rising Costs.

The problems caused by traffic congestion and urban evolution often vary greatly from one town to another but all operators of urban omnibus services in Britain have had to face the economic difficulties resulting from the steady inflation of operating costs, combined with an equally persistent decline in passenger demand (13*). The two major running expenses of bus operation, staff wages and fuel purchase, have both been steadily increasing and as a result it has generally been impossible for operators to maintain stability in fare levels for more than short periods of a year or less. A few municipal operators have begun to consider the possibility of providing direct subsidies for the operation of town bus services, in order to prevent fares rising to socially and politically undesirable levels. Already the majority of local authority operated bus services provide free or very cheap travel for pensioners and the disabled, including the corporations at Ipswich and Lowestoft.

The cost of purchasing new vehicles has also risen greatly in the last decade and many municipalities, operating on very low 'profit' margins or actually losing money, have found that the financing of large scale vehicle replacement programmes has become more difficult.

Problems Caused By Peaking of Demand For Bus Services.

There has been an increasing tendency for the remaining regular users of public transport facilities to concentrate their journeys into narrow time bands, in the mornings between 08.00 hrs. and 10.00 hrs. and in the evenings between 16.30 hrs. and 18.00 hrs. This concentration is partly a result of the general increase in commuting to work as residential areas of towns extend further from town centres, and partly a result of a relative decline in demand at other periods

throughout the day. One of the more undesirable results of short periods of high demand is the need to maintain vehicles which earn revenue for only short periods each day, as well as the need to retain staff to work them. In many instances peak services have uni-directional passenger demands, with buses running at or near capacity in one direction and virtually empty in the other. Thus, even at peak times there is often a considerable amount of passenger capacity unused.

Peaking problems tend to be worse in the larger towns and cities, where traffic congestion disrupts services when demand is greatest and where longer routes need the provision of more extra vehicles to operate longer under-utilised return journeys.

It has already been noted that the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company has been unable to reduce its fleet strength to compensate for the decline in overall passenger demand in recent years, because of the need to maintain enough vehicles to meet the more stable peaks in demand and to compensate for disruption caused by traffic congestion at cities such as Norwich, Cambridge and Peterborough, where the company operates nearly all of the city services. Similar situations have also developed on a smaller scale at Ipswich and Lowestoft and these are examined in detail in subsequent chapters.

Conclusion.

The inability of most urban local authorities to keep the level of provision of their public transportation facilities in line with changes in demand has brought about extensive research in recent years. The problems have been particularly felt in the larger urban centres and several large local authorities have commissioned detailed surveys into possible alternative solutions. (14*,15*) The transport studies in the larger conurbations have generally considered land-use

as well as public, private and goods transport by road and rail, in the built-up and surrounding areas. (16*). Unfortunately comprehensive transportation studies are very expensive to undertake and towns the size of Ipswich and Lowestoft have so far been able to produce only small-scale studies of possible ways to overcome specific problems, such as traffic congestion. Neither local authority has yet considered the financing of a detailed investigation of possible ways of making existing bus services more effective in relation to present and projected passenger demand patterns.

The problems affecting the provision of public passenger transport services in Ipswich and Lowestoft are similar in many respects but there are a number of differences so the two towns are examined separately in the following chapters.

References.

1. C D Harris, 'Ipswich England', Economic Geography, Volume 18 January 1942.

2. J Hibbs, 'The History of British Bus Services', David & Charles, 1968. p224.

3. E Rockwell, 'Urban Traffic Problems and Their Effect on Public Transport', BTR, Volume VI, August 1962.

4. F J Lloyd, 'Defeating Congestion Problems', B & C, January 1963, p14.

5. 'Minister Calls For More Initiative From Bus Operators', Transport Journal, Volume 25, December 1966.

6. C Sharp, 'Problems of Urban Passenger Transport', Leicester University Press, 1967. A study of urban passenger transport problems based mainly on a survey carried out in the Leicester area for the East Midlands Economic Planning Council and the Ministry of Transport, with a view to ensuring greater use of public transport.

7. 'Bus Demonstration Project, Summary Report No. 3, Reading', Department of the Environment, 1973. The study found that the decline in bus patronage had been halted by the introduction of the priority scheme and that the scheduled mileage lost due to congestion had been substantially reduced.

8. W Lambden, 'Recasting a Company's Old-established Town Network', B & C, July 1961, p244.

9. M Brown, 'Re-routing To Overcome a Deficit', B & C, January 1960, p21.

10. "Cobbett", 'Altering Town Facilities', B & C, May 1962, p182. "Probably the biggest mistake any concern can make is to continue town services year after year with little or no review to see how the changing habits of the public can best be met."

11. 'Adjusting Services to Meet Changing Traffic Patterns', B & C,

December 1964, p502. "Where the population has been rehoused, or development has taken place on the perimeter of the local authorities area, it is not a bad policy periodically (say every five years) to reassess the traffic-movement picture."

12. P Edwards, 'City Planners Peep At Bus Industry's Future' B & C, May 1966, p173."A new look in each city at the existing bus routes would not come amiss. This would pay regard to population movement due to slum clearance, redevelopment schemes and new developments in the outer areas."
13. J Sleeman, 'The Rise and Decline of Municipal Transport', the Omnibus Society, pamphlet (reprinted from M.P.T.A Journal).
14. 'Belfast Transportation Plan', Travers, Morgan and Partners, for Ministry of Development (Northern Ireland) and Belfast Corporation, June 1969. The study found thatin the city traffic congestion was a very small factor, the scope for reserving parts of the main road network for the exclusive use of buses was very limited and proposed that a comprehensive revision of bus routing should follow a comprehensive passenger survey.
15. 'The Leeds Approach to Planning and Transport', Buses, December 1969. "The (town) planning in every sphere must be such that the public transport system operates in conditions where it is an effective, efficient, and as far as possible, economic alternative to the use of the private car for work journeys."
16. W Solenberg and A Townsend, 'Transportation Studies and British Planning Practice', T.P.R., Number 41, 1970. p63.

CHAPTER 15.

Problems of Public Transport Provision in the County Borough of Ipswich.

The first post-war plan to ensure the maintenance of an efficient transport system in the face of increasing difficulties, caused principally by rapidly worsening traffic congestion, was formulated by Ipswich Town Council in 1948 (1*). However the free movement of cars was seen to be the first priority, rather than the improvement of public transport facilities:

"The complexity of the traffic problem in the centre of Ipswich will only be solved by long-term and far reaching road construction schemes... A comprehensive scheme of one-way traffic for the central area of the town must be tried."

The first major trading deficit on the municipal bus services was in the financial year 1954-5, when there was a loss of £7,164 , compared with a small loss of £47 in 1953-4 (2*). The 1954-5 loss caused considerable concern and debate in the town and led to proposals such as that put forward in a pamphlet produced by a local resident (3*), suggesting that a series of drastic changes in operating principles were required, including; the transfer of all Corporation bus services to the control of the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company, the withdrawal of all trolleybuses (effected in 1963), a reduction in the level of fares, the removal of the need to change vehicles at the town centre by means of the introduction of more through routes and, the introduction of 'pay as you enter' to reduce wage costs.

Between 1958 and 1960 Ipswich Corporation (ICT) substantially reduced the mileage run on its bus services and passenger demand also declined sharply (4*). In the twelve months to November 1961 the number of passengers carried by the undertaking dropped by 3·8% and

the deficit rose to £18,000 for the year (5*). The growth in private motor transport was identified as the chief cause of this decline, not only because it removed potential passengers from the buses but also because traffic congestion was beginning to seriously affect efficient operation (6*).

Cost inflation also began to seriously affect the operation of ICT services during the 1960s and this problem was the one most often debated at Transport Committee meetings. The table reproduced below shows the financial position of ICT through the 1960s, (table15.1).

Table15.1 . Trading Results For Ipswich Corporation Transport 1961-68.

Year	Revenue (To nearest '000)	Expenditure	
1961-2	355,000	332,000	
1962-3	372,000	322,000	(Source: 'Bus &
1963-4	381,000	341,000	Coach', annual
1964-5	389,000	356,000	trading results
1965-6	443,000	387,000	tables.)
1966-7	454,000	416,000	
1967-8	484,000	446,000	

Although the table shows that revenue rose each year between 1961 and 1968, the increases were almost entirely the result of fares increases introduced to ensure that income remained ahead of costs rather than of increases in the numbers of passengers carried.

The Pattern of Omnibus Services in Ipswich.

An article carried in the local paper 'The Evening Star' in 1965 (7*) suggested that many of the difficulties being faced by ICT were the result of the fact that most of the town's routes were provided on a historical basis, rather than evolving with changes in demand patterns. The author concluded that more co-ordination between the Corporation

services and ECOC services was a necessity and that the best way to ensure this was for a central bus station to be established, with close connections to the railway station.

The following maps (figs 15.1 and 15.2) have been constructed using information contained in the ICT and ECOC timetables current at May 1971 and show all the urban and suburban routes operated by the two concerns at Ipswich. Longer mainly rural and inter-urban routes operated by ECOC and the few routes operated by independent concerns to outside destinations are not included, as restrictions prohibit them from providing a local service within the borough boundary. All the services shown are operated by ICT except those numbered 208, 233 and 235/6, which are ECOC routes.

Most of the ICT routes are operated at high frequencies and most of them have more than forty journeys each way per weekday. In contrast, none of the ECOC routes has more than 15 journeys each way per weekday. The highest ICT frequency is on the short route (number X), connecting the town centre (Electric House) with the main-line railway station, which has 139 journeys each way on weekdays and 59 each way on Sundays.

The ICT route network forms a predominantly radial pattern, with routes extending from the town centre along 'A' and 'B' class roads to the borough boundary. Most of the outer termini are just within the boundary, as a result of former legislation which restricted local authorities to providing services within their own administrative areas only. At the town centre most routes terminate at the market place (Electric House) although a few use stops 100 yds. to the south near the town hall (Cornhill). Some of the routes passing Cornhill are operated on a cross-town basis but almost all of the routes based on

FIG. 15.1

IPSWICH AREA LOCAL BUS SERVICES WEEKDAYS

ECOC AND ICT ROUTES MAY 1971

KEY

Buses Per Day

10-14

20-29

40+

Special Journeys

Railway

Borough Boundary

Bus Station

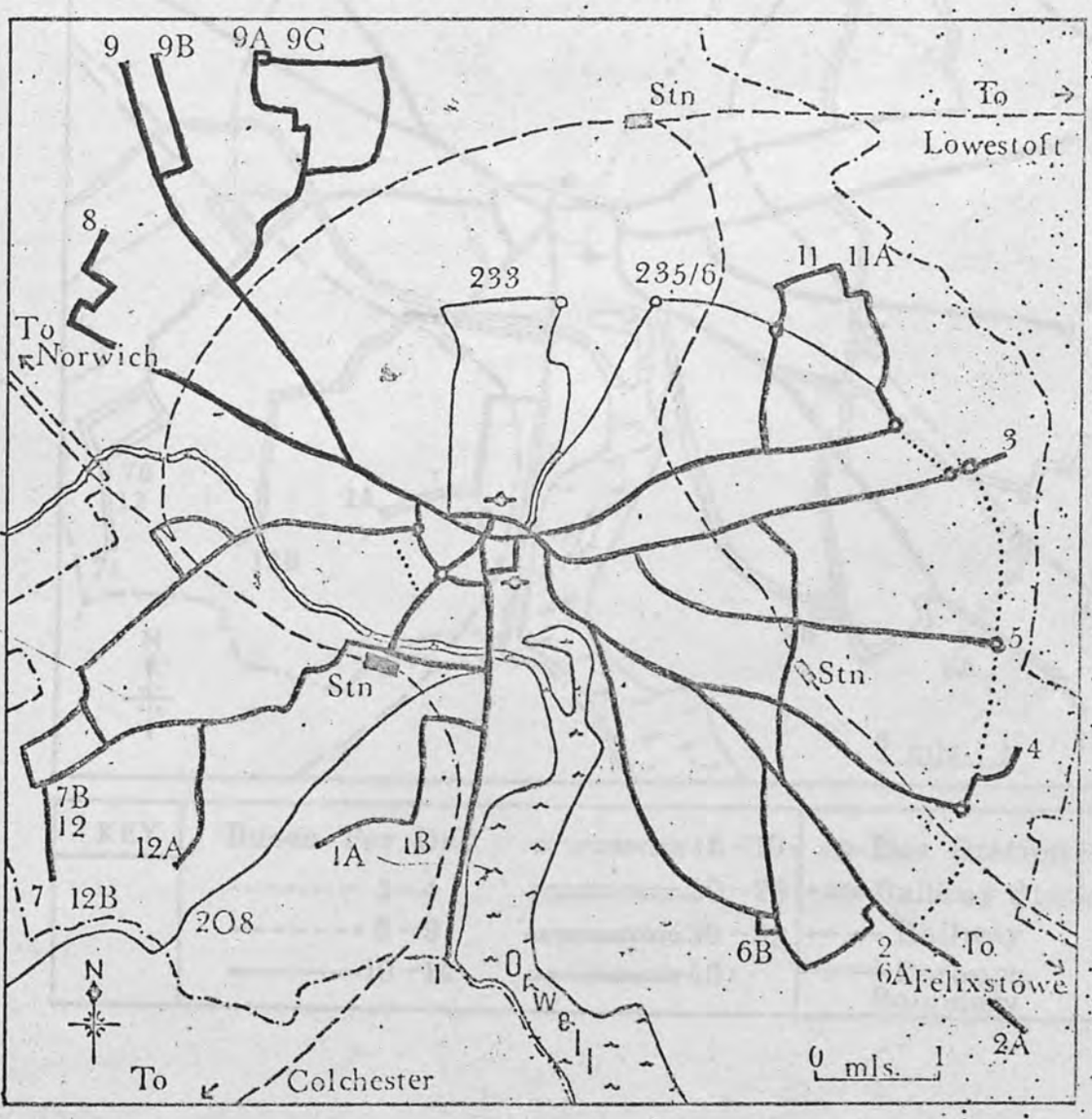
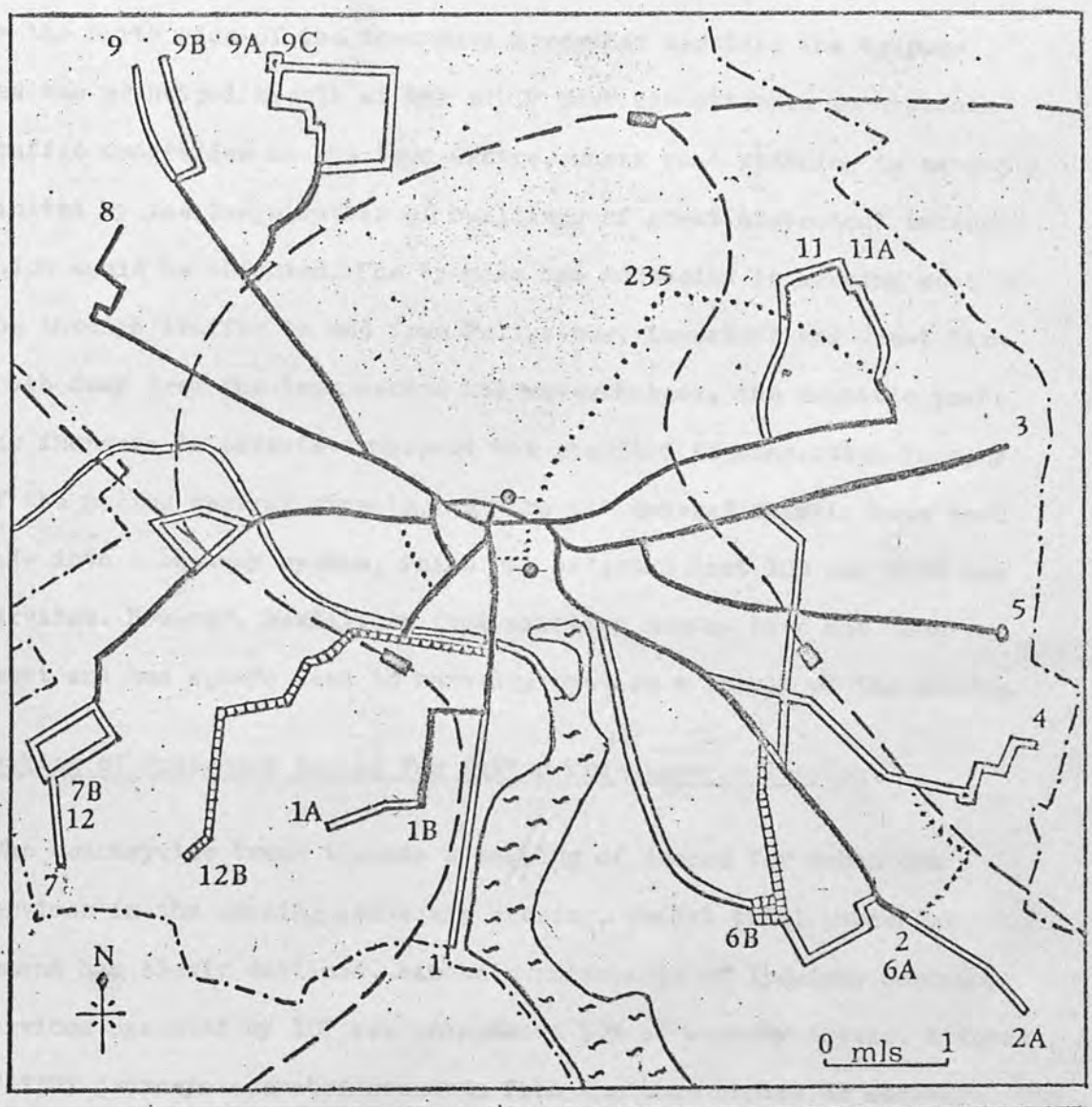


FIG. 15.2

IPSWICH AREA LOCAL BUS SERVICES - SUNDAYS - MAY 1971



KEY	Buses Per Day		
	1–4	15–19	Bus Station
	5–9	20–29	Railway Station
	10–14	30–39	Railway
		40›	Borough Boundary

Electric House terminate there.

There has been very little development of concentric bus routes in the town and only a few short sections of the A12/A14 by-pass road on the north side of the town have a regular service. The by-pass was the principal result of the early post-war attempts to overcome traffic congestion in the town centre, where road widening is severely limited by the large number of buildings of great historical interest which would be affected. The by-pass has succeeded in keeping most of the through traffic to and from Felixstowe, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth away from the town centre but nevertheless, the dramatic post-war increase in private transport has resulted in congestion in many of the narrow central streets. As a result several streets have been made into a one-way system, which has affected most ICT and ECOC bus services. However, deviations from existing routes have not been great and bus speeds seem to have improved as a result of the scheme.

Peaking of Passenger Demand For Public Transport in Ipswich.

The countrywide trend towards a peaking of demand for urban bus services in the morning and early evening, whilst total passenger demand has slowly declined, has been noticeable at Ipswich. Sunday services operated by ICT are only about 50% of weekday levels. A total of 1395 journeys operated outwards from the town centre on weekdays in May 1971, on Saturdays the total was 1312 and on Sundays only 676. The difference of 83 journeys between the weekday and Saturday totals is largely accounted for by extra works and school journeys on Mondays to Fridays. Although several local industrial concerns now either provide their own transport for employees or hire vehicles from private operators, ICT still maintains some vehicles for operation during limited peak periods only. The trend towards peaking of demand is shown in the following table (table 15.2), which gives the numbers of vehicles

in use at peak and off-peak (mid-day) periods, each year between 1961 and 1968.

Table 15.2 . Vehicles in Use at Peak Hours and at Mid-day. Ipswich Corporation Transport.

Year	Peak	Mid-day	Total Fleet
1961-2	55	31	62
1962-3	55	31	62
1963-4	55	31	62
1964-5	57	36	64
1965-6	60	36	68
1966-7	61	24	68
1967-8	63	24	72
Change 1961-8	+8	-7	+10

(Source: 'Bus & Coach', annual trading results tables.)

Problems of Public Passenger Transport Provision in Ipswich, Conclusions.

The financial results shown in table 15.1 indicate that Ipswich Corporation Transport Department seems to have recovered from the period of severe financial difficulties experienced during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Nevertheless, inflation and steadily declining overall passenger demand have continued to adversely affect revenue and traffic congestion still restrains a fully reliable service. The declining passenger levels and inflation have meant that regular fare increases have had to be made to maintain financial stability (8*,9*). To offset high fares the Corporation has introduced a limited Rates subsidy for elderly and disabled passengers. By September 1971 a total of 13,631 elderly concession permits and 86 disabled persons permits had been issued, allowing subsidised, but not free, travel for holders (9*). Many ICT routes are still operated by traditional two-man double-deck vehicles which, although best able to deal with peak demands, lead to over staffing and surplus capacity at off-peak

periods. All new vehicles delivered since 1968 have been suitable for one-man operation and table 15.3 below shows how the composition of the bus fleet has changed in recent years.

Table 15.3 .Composition of Ipswich Corporation Bus Fleet. (10*,11*,12*)

Year	Two-man double-deck		Single-deck o.m.o. fitted		Double-deck o.m.o. fitted		Two-man trolleybus	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
March 1961	32	51	8	13	0	0	23	36
Dec. 1967	60	88	8	12	0	0	0	0
Dec. 1972	54	75	14	19	4	6	0	0

Notes: Until 1951 the system was operated entirely by trolleybuses. The last trolleybus was withdrawn in August 1963.

The ECOC operates only two routes in Ipswich, serving areas in the northern part of the town not covered by Corporation routes. These routes seem to be rather out of place and could conveniently be incorporated into the ICT network so that long term planning of the town's public transport system could be made simpler. Despite the presence of the ECOC routes the overall public transport network in Ipswich is still quite simple in form and there has not been a great need to alter the pre-existing network, except to relieve central area congestion, to meet changing demand patterns caused by the growth and development of the town. Most new residential developments have been served by simple extensions of existing routes and this trend is likely to continue as further housing development takes place towards the borough boundary. The problems of cost inflation and peaking of passenger demand seem to be those most likely to persist or increase in the future.

Ipswich Corporation operates nearly all the public passenger transport services in its own administrative area and is able to formulate an overall transport policy. In Lowestoft, a town of approximately half the population of Ipswich, the situation is not quite as straightforward, as the town has two operators, each with approximately half the urban routes within the municipal boundary. The problems which result from this situation are examined in detail in the following chapter.

References.

1. Evening Star (Ipswich), 15/12/48.

2. Evening Star, 26/7/55.

3. C E Masterson, 'A Solution to the Transport Problems of the Borough of Ipswich', (pamphlet), February 1957.

4. Evening Star, 10/9/60. "During the past three years every endeavour had been made to relate services to demand. There had been a substantial decrease in mileage, but also unfortunately a decrease in passenger demand and this was continuing. The Corporation was faced... with a serious financial problem."

5. Evening Star, 16/11/61.

6. C W Allen, 'The Future of Municipal Transport', B & C, October 1959, p339.

7. B K Dyes, 'One-Station Plan For a Better Bus Service in Ipswich', article in the Evening Star, 27/11/65.

8. 'Municipal Trading Results', B & C, various dates, 1963-68.

9. East Anglian Daily Times, 10/9/71. A report stated that insurance premiums for the ICT bus fleet were to be increased from £7,130 to £11,250 per year.

10. R F Neale (ed.) 'Fleet History PF1, Eastern Counties Omnibus Company Limited and the Corporations of Great Yarmouth, Ipswich and Lowestoft', The P.S.V.Circle and The Omnibus Society, 1958, with addenda PF1A and PF1B, 1961. Complete fleet histories of the four operators, with dates of purchase and disposal of all vehicles owned.

11. 'British Bus Fleets No.4 East Anglia', Ian Allen, March 1967, p49 Ipswich Corporation Transport.

12. P.S.V. Circle 'Eastern Area News Sheets', monthly. Gives current vehicle movements of all public service vehicles licensed in the Eastern Traffic Area. Other news sheets cover all of Britain.

CHAPTER 16.

Problems of Public Transport Provision in the Municipal Borough of Lowestoft.

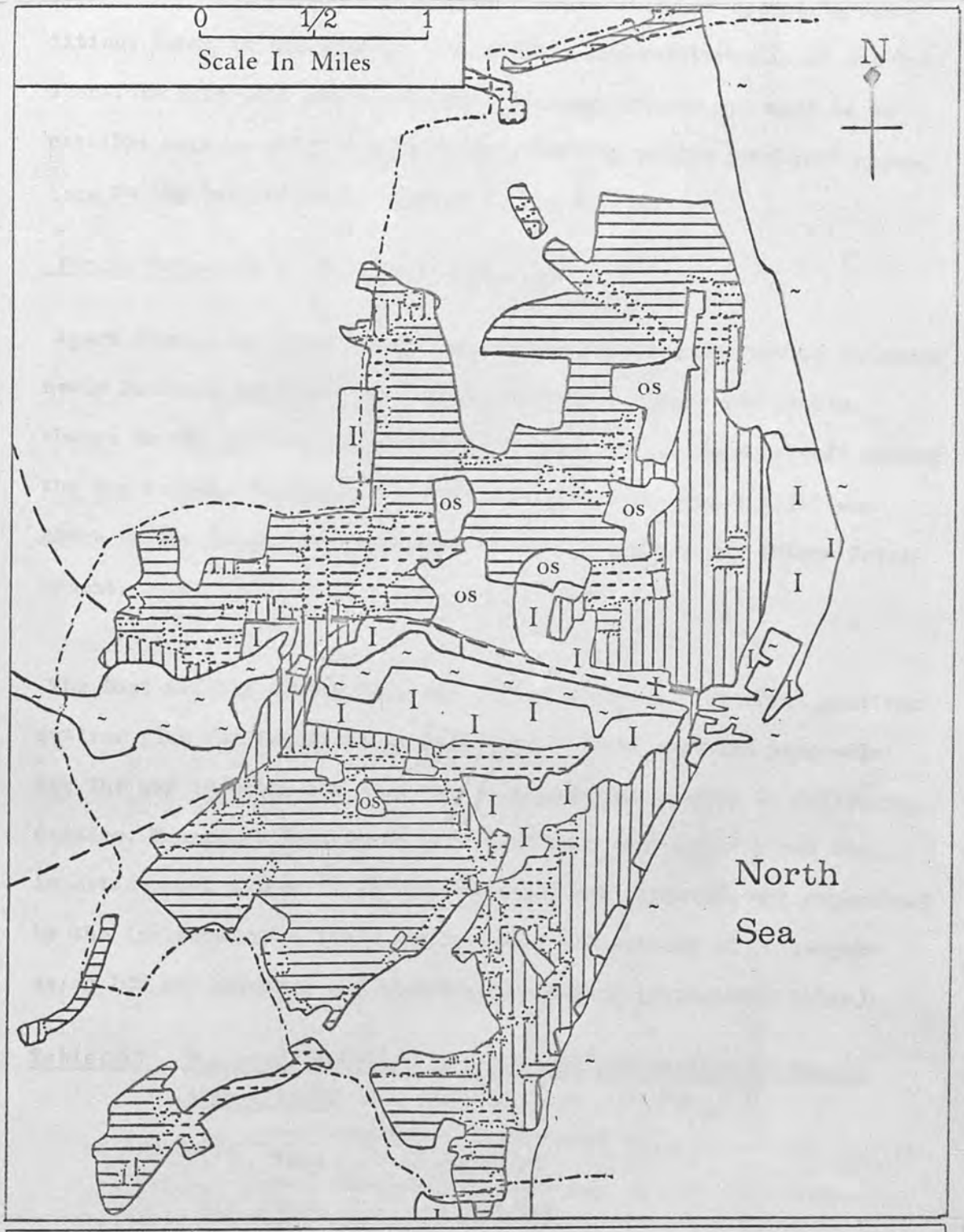
The provision of public road transport services in the Borough of Lowestoft is divided almost equally between the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company and Lowestoft Corporation. This division of facilities results from a series of historical factors (see Chapter 3). The Corporation (LCT) bus routes are based on the former north-south tram route which followed the A12 trunk road through the eastern part of the borough and which served the greater part of the built-up area of the town at the beginning of the present century. The ECOC routes were mostly introduced between 1910 and 1930 to serve nearby villages to the west, such as Oulton, Oulton Broad and Carlton Colville, which have since coalesced into the town, due largely to the rapid expansion of residential development in the 1950s and 1960s. The increase in housing development in the town since the last war is shown on the map (fig.16.1).

The bus operators in Lowestoft have had to contend with all the usual problems caused by traffic congestion, cost inflation and changes in passenger demand patterns and these have been made all the more difficult by the nature of the competition between the LCT services and ECOC, with each attempting to extend its influence at the expense of the other. The results of this competition are examined in detail in a subsequent section (page21).

Although Lowestoft is only a moderate size town in both population and area and thus does not have to face such severe problems of traffic congestion as some of the larger urban areas in Britain, many of the conditions found in the cities are nevertheless present on a smaller scale in the borough, in addition to which there are problems caused

FIG. 16.1

THE SPREAD OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN LOWESTOFT.



by the restrictive physical geography of the town's location. In this chapter the development of road passenger transport in Lowestoft since 1945 is examined first, followed by a close study of operating conditions found at the present time (1972), the relationship of the two operators with each other and, finally, suggestions are made as to possible ways in which the problems affecting public transport operators in the town might be tackled in the future.

Public Transport in Lowestoft 1945 - 1965.

Apart from a few short extensions of pre-existing bus routes to serve newly built-up outlying residential districts, there was little change in the pattern of operation of bus services in Lowestoft during the two decades following the last war, although some thought was given by the local authority towards possible plans for future development.

The East Suffolk County Planning Office published the first post war outline plan for Lowestoft in July 1950 (1*). It included proposals for the way in which the town should expand and develop in following decades. Transport facilities were mentioned only briefly but the important part played by public transport was stressed, and emphasized by the inclusion of a table showing that the numbers of passengers using LCT bus services was steadily increasing (reproduced below).

Table 16.1 . Passenger Journeys By Lowestoft Corporation Transport 1945 - 1947.

Year	Journeys
1945	4,673,078
1946	5,999,308
1947	6,317,582

The authors of the 1950 plan concluded that the main problem then facing the bus services was congestion caused by frequent openings of

the harbour bridge, 6033 times in 1947. Many of the bridge openings were at peak traffic periods and caused the LCT four minute interval summer service and five minute interval winter service to suffer severe delays, as each opening held up traffic for at least ten minutes. The high level of public transport usage was attributed to factors such as ; the fuel shortage, a car shortage and the "new found freedom of travel since the war". The only major proposal which the plan could put forward affecting public transport provision was that a new bus station should be established adjacent to the Central railway station.

Very little was heard of the 1950 Outline Plan following its publication and its recommendations were not followed when redevelopment and expansion of the town began later in the 1950s. The lack of an effective comprehensive town plan for Lowestoft continued until the early 1960s, when the County Planning Office set about producing a completely new plan. Increased population growth rates, worsening traffic congestion and pressure from large numbers of individual planning applications meant that most of the trends and forecasts used in the 1950 plan were no longer valid.

The new plan was published in draft form in 1965 (2*). Its main concern was with the future development of land use and transportation in the central area of the town and its main conclusion was that there existed a need for a drastic alteration to the road pattern in the town centre. By this means it was hoped that three important objectives could be achieved; a dramatic reduction in traffic congestion, an increase in car parking facilities and a removal of all traffic from the principal shopping streets. Public transport services received much less attention than private transport and apart from the renewed suggestion that a bus station should be placed near the

railway station, most of the proposals would have restricted the operating efficiency of the bus services.

To completely remove vehicle traffic from the main shopping street, London Road North, a complex of one-way streets, diversions and new relief roads, were proposed. Traffic moving northwards over the harbour bridge was to be diverted a quarter mile westwards along Denmark Road before resuming a northward course. Southbound traffic was to be diverted a similar distance to the east of the shopping centre. The consequent effect of these measures would have application more to the services provided by LCT than those of the ECOC. Few ECOC routes used London Road North and those that did were out-of-town services that could adjust fairly easily to diversions. However LCT routes would have been very greatly affected, as all except one ran along the entire length of the road. Diversion of these routes would not only have greatly increased the length of most journeys but also made access to the shopping centre very much less convenient for bus passengers.

The plan was accepted by the town council with a few minor alterations, although so far (1973) no start has been made on any of the major road construction and diversion schemes north of the harbour.

As well as containing detailed proposals for restructuring the road system north of the harbour bridge the 1965 plan also suggested that there was a need for the eventual construction of a third road crossing of Lowestoft harbour. At present there are two road bridges, at the eastern and western (Oulton Broad) edges of the town. The easterly bridge is on the A12 trunk road, which connects Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft with Ipswich and London. The steady increase in local and through traffic on this road and bridge, which caused congestion problems in 1950 has become steadily worse in recent years and the

effects which this congestion has had on the provision of bus services in the borough are now looked at more fully.

Problems Caused By Lowestoft Harbour Bridge.

The centre of Lowestoft is located very near to the north side of the harbour bridge and consequently most bus routes which connect the town centre with southern parts of the town converge at the bridge. The Oulton Broad bridge, two miles inland, is not affected by frequent delays due to the passage of shipping but neither is it situated so that bus services to and from the town centre can be conveniently routed over it. The only bus route which crosses the Oulton Broad bridge is the ECOC 3/3D circular service, which uses the harbour bridge as well. Frequency maps for all LCT and ECOC bus routes in the Lowestoft area are reproduced below (figs 16.2 - 16.3) . All LCT bus services, except for route number 6, which terminates at the town centre, cross the harbour bridge, as do ECOC routes serving south-west Lowestoft, Carlton Colville and Kessingland. All these routes are subject to severe delays, not only because of shipping movements but also because major traffic arteries converge at the bridge.

Sample traffic flow figures for the two Lowestoft bridges reveal that more road traffic of all types uses the harbour bridge than the Oulton Broad bridge. The traffic counts are reproduced below (table 16.2). They were taken during the early part of the evening peak period and traffic moving in each direction was observed on separate occasions. Industrial concerns are situated on both sides of the harbour and so a homeward movement of workers was recorded in each direction as well as the southward homeward movement of shoppers and shop staff from the town centre.

The lower overall figures recorded at the Oulton Broad bridge

Table 16.2 Sample Counts of Traffic Flows at Oulton Broad and Lowestoft Harbour Bridges.

OULTON BROAD

(a) Friday 17.9.71

Northbound. 16.30 - 17.00 hrs

Class	Number	%
Car	319	69·5
Bicycle	56	12·2
Motor-Cycle	43	9·4
Commercial	36	7·8
Bus	5	1·1
TOTAL	459	100·0

(b) Monday 20.9.71

Southbound. 16.30 - 17.00 hrs

Number	%
297	68·7
70	16·2
32	7·4
28	6·5
5	1·2
432	100·0

LOWESTOFT HARBOUR

(c) Tuesday 22.12.70 *

Northbound. 16.30 - 17.00 hrs

Class	Number	%
Car	270	45·5
Bicycle	159	26·8
Motor-Bicycle	71	12·0
Commercial	79	13·3
Bus	14	2·4
TOTAL	593	100·0

(d) Monday 21.12.70 **

Southbound. 16.30 - 17.00 hrs

Number	%
359	49·0
206	28·1
104	14·2
48	6·5
16	2·2
733	100·0

(e) Thursday 16.9.71

Southbound. 16.30 - 17.00 hrs

Class	Number	%
Car	431	52·5
Bicycle	222	27·0
Motor-Bicycle	116	14·1
Commercial	33	4·0
Bus	18	2·2
TOTAL	820	99·8

Notes:

* Bridge open to shipping 16.30 - 16.37 hrs.
** Bridge open to shipping 16.45 - 16.51 hrs.

ROUTE FREQUENCIES LOWESTOFT AREA

ECOC ROUTES WEEKDAYS NOVEMBER 1970

FIG. 16.2

For Key See Fig. 15.2

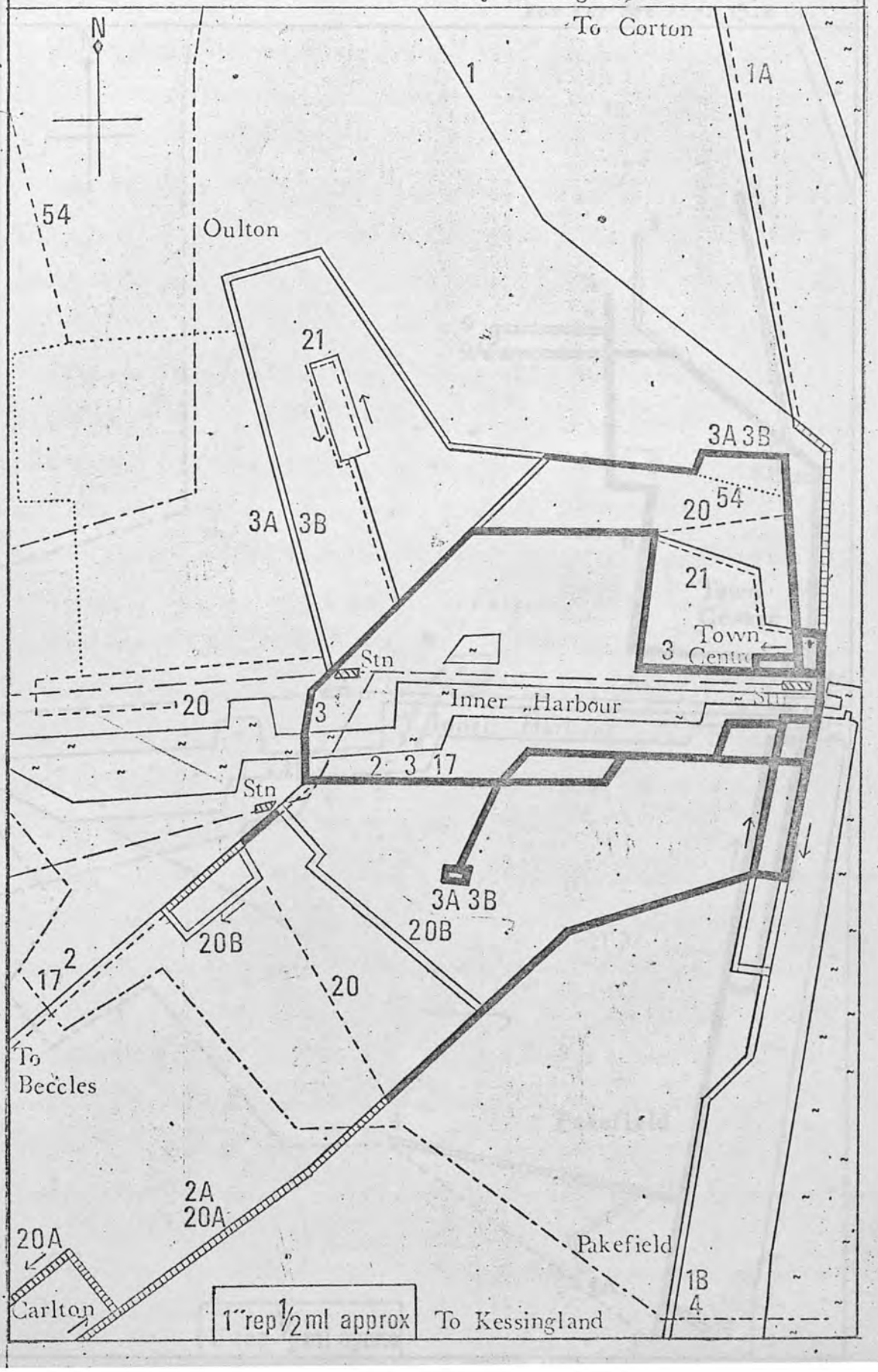
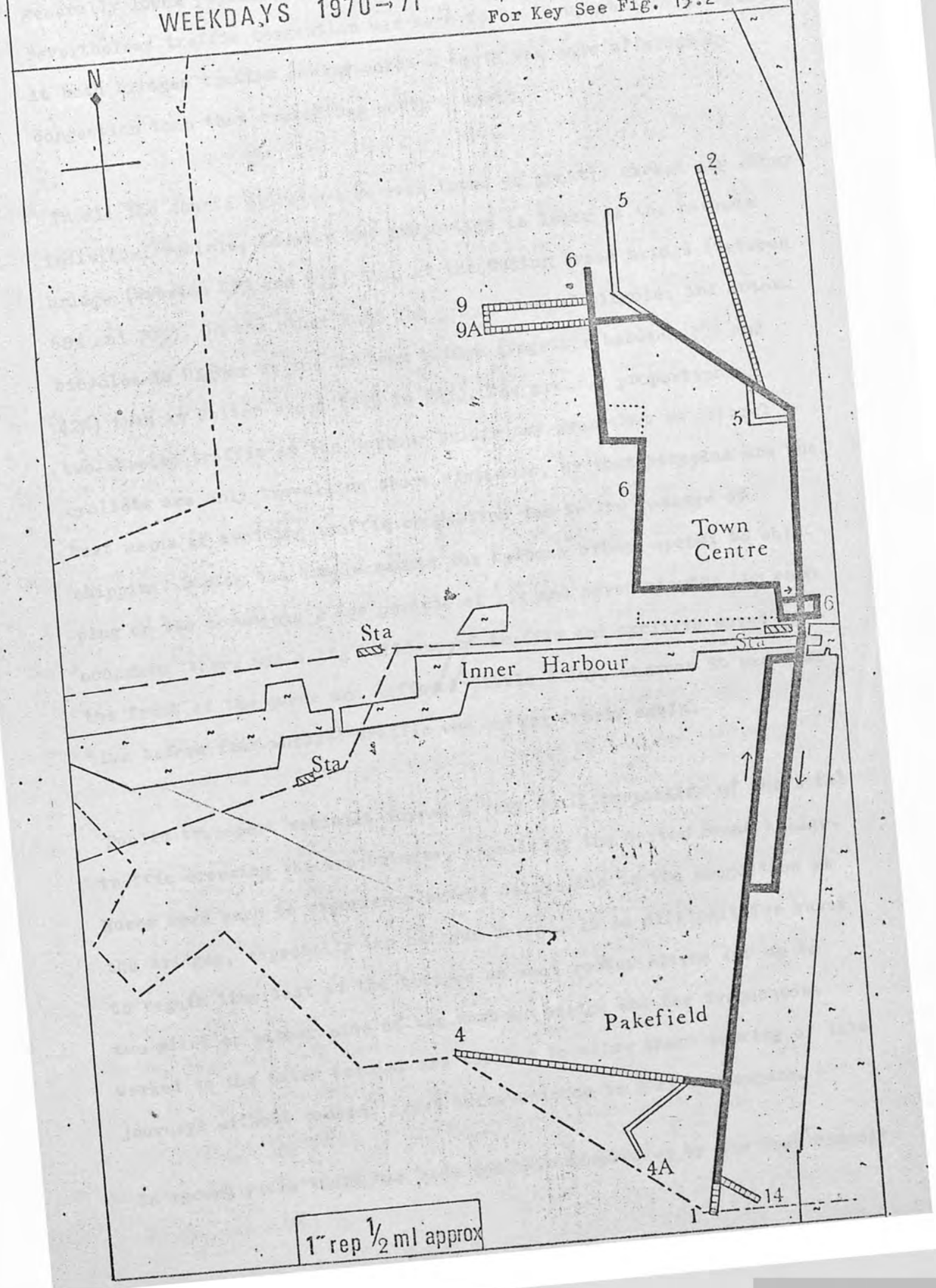


FIG. 16.3

ROUTE FREQUENCIES LOWESTOFT CORPORATION

WEEKDAYS 1970→71

For Key See Fig. 15.2



probably reflect its greater distance from the town centre and the generally lower population density in the western part of the town. Nevertheless traffic congestion was seen to build up at both bridges. At both bridges traffic moving north - south was more affected by congestion than that travelling south - north.

In all the counts private cars were found to greatly exceed any other individual vehicle, however the proportion is lower at the harbour bridge (between 45% and 53%) than at the Oulton Broad bridge (between 68% and 70%). On the other hand the proportion of bicycles and motor-bicycles is higher at the harbour bridge (together between 39% and 42%) than at Oulton Broad (21% to 24%). The greater proportion of two-wheeled traffic at the harbour bridge may mean that in general cyclists are only travelling short distances, or that bicycles are the best means of avoiding traffic congestion due to the passage of shipping. During the sample counts the harbour bridge opened to shipping on two occasions, for periods of six and seven minutes. On each occasions there was a big build-up of traffic and cyclists moved to the front of the queue and suffered little delay, whereas it was some time before four-wheeled traffic was moving freely again.

Public transport vehicles formed a very small proportion of the total traffic crossing the two bridges, especially the Oulton Broad bridge. Buses were seen to experience severe delays due to the congestion at the bridges, especially the harbour bridge. It is difficult for buses to regain time lost at the bridges as most routes extend for up to two miles on either side of the harbour bridge and the frequencies worked to the outer termini are too low to allow short working of late journeys without causing great inconvenience to many passengers.

In recent years there has been sporadic discussion by the town council

about the possibility of introducing traffic management schemes which would allow buses to move to the head of queues of traffic waiting at the harbour bridge. However no commitment has so far been made to implement such a scheme. A bus priority lane could easily be introduced on the southern approach to the bridge, where the one-way scheme at present in operation could be adjusted with little inconvenience to other traffic. As it is, passengers often find that it is quicker to alight from queuing buses and walk to the bridge rather than to wait for slow moving traffic to clear. The LCT number 6 route was introduced in January 1969 in an attempt to regularise frequencies north of the bridge but unfortunately buses on this route are still delayed by congestion near the central terminus.

The ECOC routes most affected by congestion at the harbour bridge are the 3/3D Oulton Broad circular route, 3A/3B to Whitton Estate and the 20A/20B to Carlton Colville/Oulton Broad. The 3/3D and 20A/20B services run on a fifteen minute interval on weekdays and late arrivals at the Central Railway Station terminus sometimes mean that following journeys have to be cancelled. Also, due to the system by which ECOC bus crews work journeys on several different routes during the course of their daily shifts, a late arrival on one route may result in a late departure or cancellation on a different route. Delays at the harbour bridge may result in vehicles running late many miles from the cause of the delay, where potential passengers may become disgruntled without being aware of the reason for the timetable not being adhered to.

The steady increase in congestion at the two Lowestoft bridges is mainly caused by the growth in private car journeys, which are likely to increase still further as motor-cycle and bicycle users find that they can afford more weatherproof personal transport. If a proportion of present car users could be persuaded to transfer to public transport

then congestion would be greatly reduced. The highest number of cars recorded during any of the half-hour sample periods was 431 (in one direction). If these cars were occupied by an average of 1·5 persons then all 431 cars could be replaced by ten 45 seat one-man buses. Unfortunately this would probably not be feasible as the residences and workplaces of many of the car travellers may not be within easy reach of existing bus routes. If the number of cars could be reduced then a substantial increase in bus journey speeds and thus reliability would result. However it is doubtful whether either LCT or ECOC would welcome a very great transfer of peak passenger movements to public transport as this would necessitate the provision of extra vehicles and crews for uneconomically short periods. ECOC would be the more affected in this respect as the company already has several vehicles in the Lowestoft area which are under-utilised at off-peak periods.

So, many of the peak hour passenger movements over the two Lowestoft bridges, which are not at present by public transport, are unlikely to be suitable for voluntary or forced transfer to buses in the near future due, not only to the dispersed pattern of origins and destinations of travellers, but also because further bus provision at peak periods would be economically disadvantageous to the operators. Therefore the considerable timetable disruption caused by traffic congestion at the bridges is likely to continue and probably increase, as the East Anglian tradition of using bicycles for short journeys is replaced by the use of more comfortable motorised transport.

If traffic congestion is to be restrained then the greater efficiency of the bus and the bicycle in moving peak traffic flows must be taken more into account when new transportation networks are being planned in Lowestoft, than was the case in the 1965 Draft Plan. The level of present demand for public transport facilities in

Lowestoft is now examined in detail.

Demand For Public Passenger Transport Facilities in Lowestoft 1971-72.

Extensive field observations were undertaken during parts of 1971 and 1972 to find out the extent of passenger demand for bus services in Lowestoft and particularly to find out the extent to which the demand was evolving into the pattern of morning and early evening peaks found in many British towns and cities. The results of the survey have been presented in graph form from which it is possible to draw a number of conclusions. LCT services and ECOC services were recorded concurrently and it has been possible to identify and evaluate the differences and similarities in the operating conditions affecting the two operators.

Recordings of bus passenger loadings were taken at the town centre terminus of most ECOC urban and rural services, at a point near the Central Railway Station, which is also passed by all LCT services. During the observation periods it was possible to record almost all southbound departures and northbound arrivals, as well as a number of other journeys. Unfortunately a small number of ECOC services, including the popular 1/1A route between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, could not be recorded as they were based on the ECOC bus station, which was out of visual range of the recording point. A few ECOC routes which commence at the bus station, such as the 4 group of routes to Kessingland and Southwold, also pass the railway station and so could be recorded. The graphs shown on following pages (figs. 16.4 to 16.14) reveal how passenger loadings on the bus services fluctuate throughout the day. LCT and ECOC recordings have been kept separate throughout and ECOC routes have been further divided to enable individual services to be analysed more closely. Wherever possible inward and outward journeys on each service have been recorded simultaneously

so that the peak demands may be seen more accurately.

For each individual route or group of routes for which observations were taken four graphs have been drawn; for inward and outward journeys during the period Autumn 1971 - Spring 1972 and similarly for summer (August) 1972. It is possible to identify from the graphs periods of peak demand and also to see the extent of seasonal variations in passenger levels. Initially passenger figures were recorded on the basis of average loads per vehicle arriving or departing during fixed fifteen minute periods. However, as several routes operated on a fifteen minute interval timetable, unpredictable circumstances such as congestion and bridge openings sometimes resulted in buses arriving or departing outside their scheduled time segments. To minimise irregularities thus caused and to produce smoother graph curves, the average figures obtained for each fifteen minute period have themselves been averaged with those on either side to give running means (i.e. AB,BC,CD,DE,...etc).

If the urban routes operated by ECOC in Lowestoft are considered separately from the company's rural routes and inter-urban routes, which are prohibited from carrying short distance passengers within the town boundary, and compared with LCT services, then a number of similarities and differences in demand patterns become apparent. Graphs for each operator's urban services are similar in that peaks and lows are found at broadly corresponding times of the day, however loadings on LCT buses were found to be consistently higher than those on ECOC routes. During the August 1972 observation period the average number of passengers per vehicle (p.p.v.) noted on inward ECOC vehicles was 11·1 whereas for LCT vehicles it was 17·6. For outward journeys in August the figures were 14·2 p.p.v. for ECOC urban routes and 19·3 p.p.v.

for LCT routes (excluding route 6), (graphs figs. 16.9 and 16.10). If the three southern LCT services (routes 1,4,4A) are considered as basically one route (see fig 16.3) then they can be jointly compared with the individual ECOC routes for which separate graphs have been produced, some of which are rather different from the graphs for the ECOC urban routes as a whole.

The same periods of peak demand were observed on all the routes of both operators for which sufficient recordings could be taken to enable valid graphs to be drawn, although the length and intensity of the peak periods varies considerably from route to route. The peak periods for buses arriving at the town centre were found to be 09.00 - 11.00 hrs. and 14.00 - 15.30 hrs. and in each case LCT vehicles averaged about 10 p.p.v. more than ECOC vehicles. Each operator also experienced a slightly less pronounced early evening inward peak between 18.45 hrs. and 20.15 hrs.

The peak periods for journeys outwards from the town centre were found to be mostly not coincident with the inward peaks. In August the main outward peaks were 11.45 - 12.45 hrs. and 14.45 - 17.45 hrs. Again the peaks for LCT services were much more pronounced than those for urban ECOC routes. The evening peak for outward ECOC journeys was found to be rather shorter than for LCT services. As with inward journeys, short evening peaks were also in evidence, especially on the LCT graph for August 1972, on which the two peak times are around 19.45 hrs. and 21.45 hrs.

The demand between the peak periods was found to be generally much lower. For inward journeys the lowest loadings were recorded during the late afternoon and early evening, in part coincident with a period of peak demand for outward journeys. Outward bound vehicles were

found to be least used in the morning, at the same time as the inward peak. Although the periods of low demand were at roughly similar times for both LCT and ECOC services, ECOC loadings were consistently lower than those on LCT services at these times and several ECOC vehicles were observed to be running in service with no passengers at all, including a number operating balancing workings to peak flow journeys in the reverse direction.

Thus, a comparison of inward and outward passenger loadings on LCT and ECOC vehicles shows that both companies experience passenger demands which vary through the day, often resulting in peak demands in one direction being balanced by very low demand in the other. Fortunately the peak demand periods are not intense enough in Lowestoft to require the provision of many extra vehicles for short periods each day. The basic $7\frac{1}{2}$ minute daytime interval service operated by LCT is supplemented by one extra vehicle for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours of the evening peak. However, the ECOC policy of producing small one-man operated buses for the relatively low level of demand on many routes at off-peak periods has meant that some additional larger vehicles are required to meet peak demands, but these usually replace small vehicles on a one-for-one basis without increasing the frequency, although there are some additional journeys on certain rural and inter-urban routes.

If the ECOC urban services are examined individually it is noticeable that there are differences in the level of demand for them. The LCT route 6 should also be considered separately from the main LCT services as it differs from them in a number of respects and is more similar to some of the routes operated by ECOC in the town.

The urban ECOC routes in Lowestoft may conveniently be divided into two distinct categories. Firstly there are a number of regular interval

all-day and all-week services and, secondly there are a few infrequent and irregular routes which do not operate in the evenings or at weekends. These two types of route may be seen clearly on the map of ECOC services in the Lowestoft area (fig.16.2). It was possible to record only a few passenger loadings on some of the less frequent routes but nevertheless it became apparent that on the whole they were much less well used than the regular interval services. As both types of route serve similar areas of the town the results tend to support the suggestion that most users prefer a predictable regular service to an irregular one for which times are less easy to remember and possibly less convenient.

It was possible to obtain sufficient recordings for some of the more frequent ECOC routes to construct individual usage graphs, especially for the 20A/20B and 3/3D groups of routes. The 20A/20B was following a regular fifteen minute frequency for most of the day, with journeys alternating between the two outer termini, although evening journeys were rather less frequent. The 3/3D service was also at a fifteen minute interval in each direction, although again there was a decline in the evening.

The demand curves for the two ECOC routes exhibit several marked contrasts. The most striking feature of the graphs for the 20A/B service is the very prominent peaking, especially on outward journeys between 16.00 and 18.00 hrs. However this evening peak is followed by a very sudden decline in demand, with outwards loadings decreasing from 32 p.p.v. at 18.00 hrs. to a low of 3 p.p.v. at 19.00 hrs. Inward journeys on the 20A/B were found to be peaked in mid-morning, declining at about 10.45 hrs. The relatively high mid-morning inward loadings contrast with the exceptionally low demand for outward

journeys at the same time. Between 08.30 and 09.30 hrs. buses leaving the town centre on 20A/B carried an average of less than two passengers. The 20A/B service thus exhibits many of the features of a typical 'commuter' service, with periods of high demand in one direction being offset by very low demand for balancing journeys.

Demand peaking was found to be much less evident on the 3/3D route and, apart from an abnormally high recording of 30 p.p.v. on an inward vehicle at 22.00 hrs. in August 1972 (the result of observations being made on a day when an important annual holiday event was being held at Oulton Broad, which had just finished), peaks were both shorter in duration and at lower levels than for 20A/B. Off-peak demand for 3/3D was found to be rather greater than for the 20A/B, particularly in August. This is very largely due to the fact that the 3/3D is used more for recreational purposes, for which travel is more likely to be undertaken outside peak hours. An indication of the extent to which the 3/3D is used for recreational purposes in comparison with other ECOC urban services in Lowestoft is the relatively greater difference between summer and winter passenger levels on the route. The graphs for winter 1971/72 recordings on 20A/B show peaks at similar times and levels to those for August 1972, whereas winter demand for 3/3D was found to be about half that in August, with the early evening slack period being especially noticeable.

Two ECOC urban services in Lowestoft have been the subject of some uncertainty in recent years. In June 1971 the company announced its intention to withdraw routes 3A/3B, between Whitton Estate and Oulton Village via Central Station and 21 between Central Station and Oulton (see fig 16.2). The route 21 had been introduced only two years earlier to serve an expanding residential development between existing routes. The company requested grants of £4848 for service

FIGS 16.4- 14 . Record of Passenger Loads on Buses Arriving at and Departing From Lowestoft Town Centre (Central Railway Station). Figs 16.4- 8 for Autumn 1971 - Spring 1972. Figs 16.9- 14 for Summer (August) 1972.

FIG. 16.4A

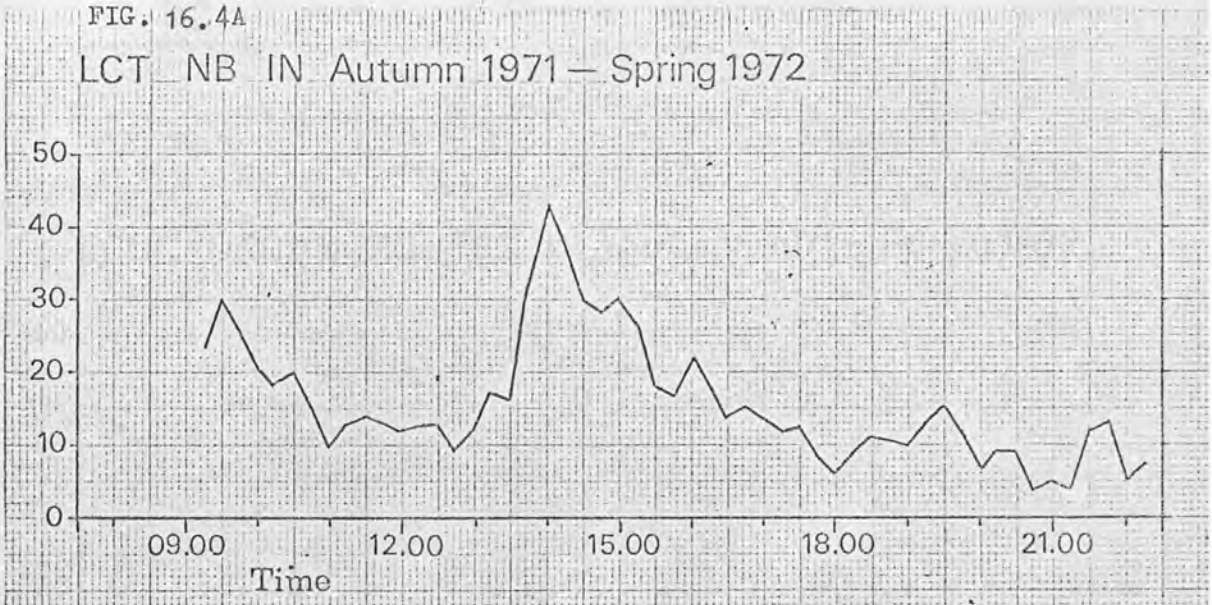
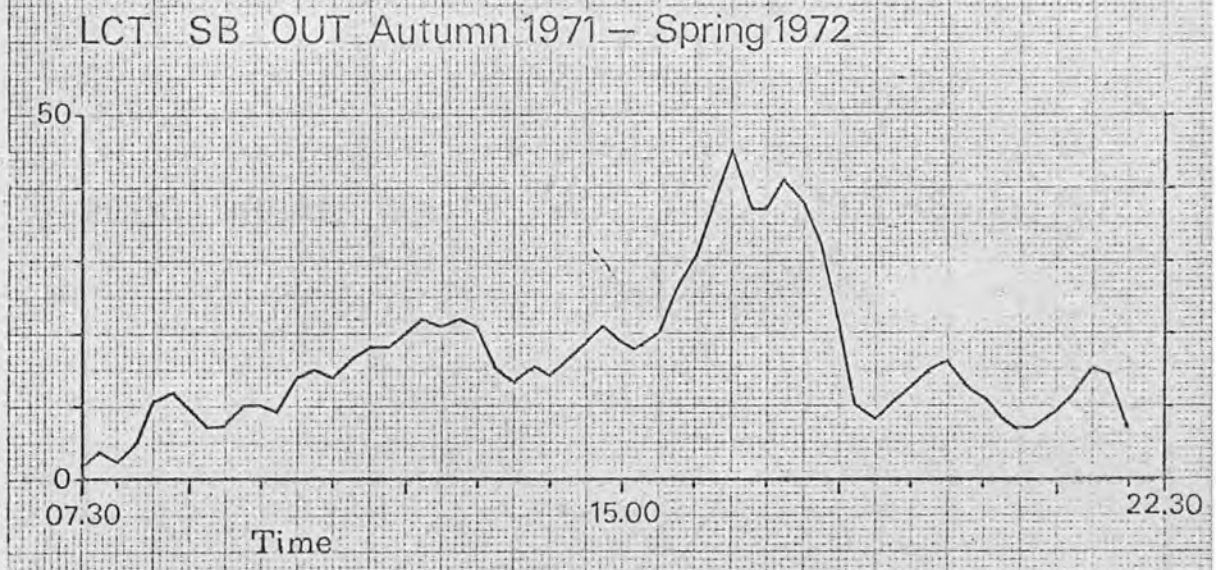


FIG. 16.4B



KEY FOR FIGS. 16.4 - 16.14.

Vertical Scale Represents Passenger Load Per Vehicle.

Horizontal Scale Represents Time Of Day (24hr Clock).

FIG. 16.5A

ECOC URBAN ROUTES IN Autumn 1971 – Spring 1972

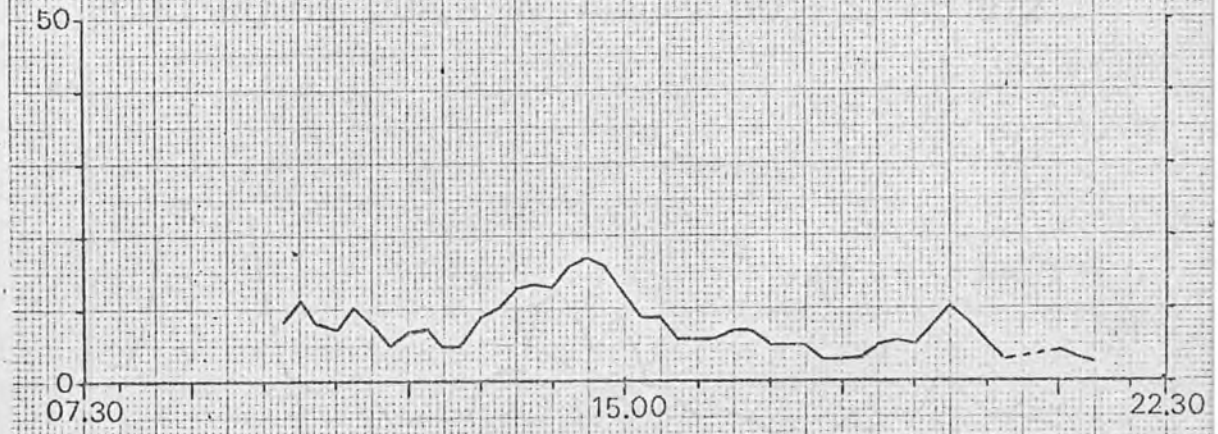


FIG. 16.5B

ECOC URBAN ROUTES OUT Autumn 1971 – Spring 1972

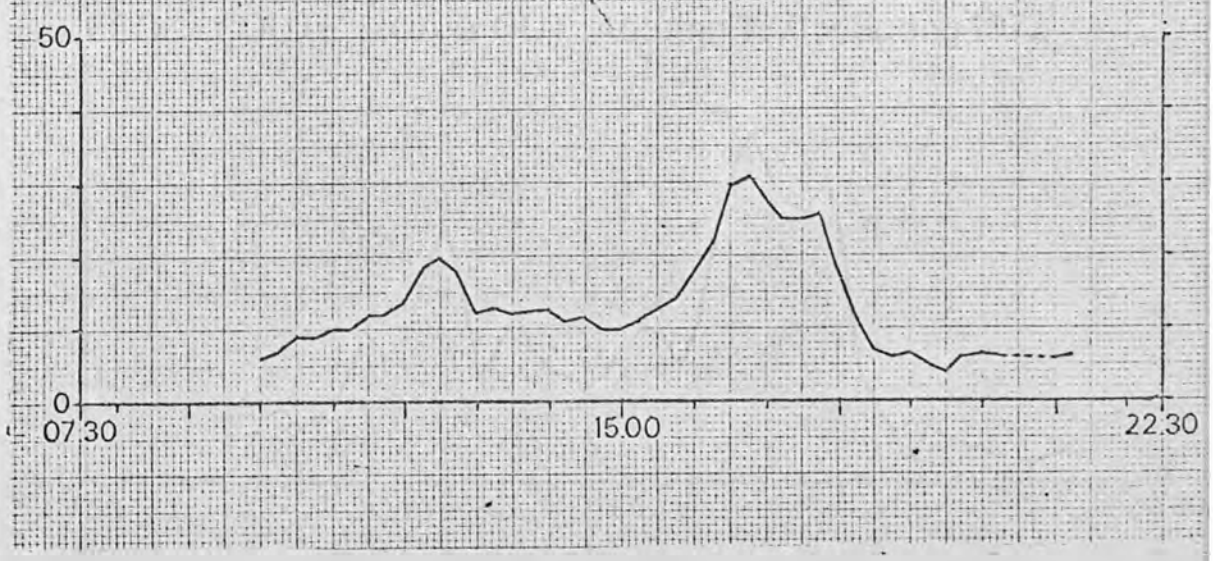


FIG. 16.6A

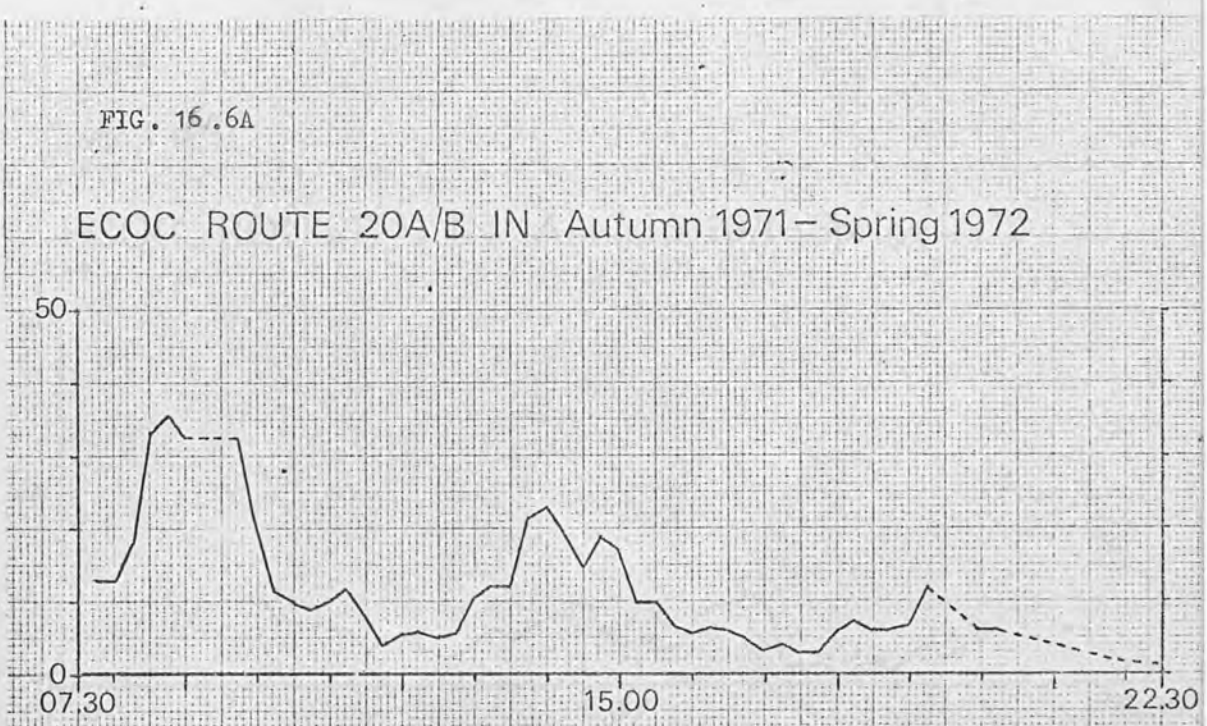


FIG. 16.6B

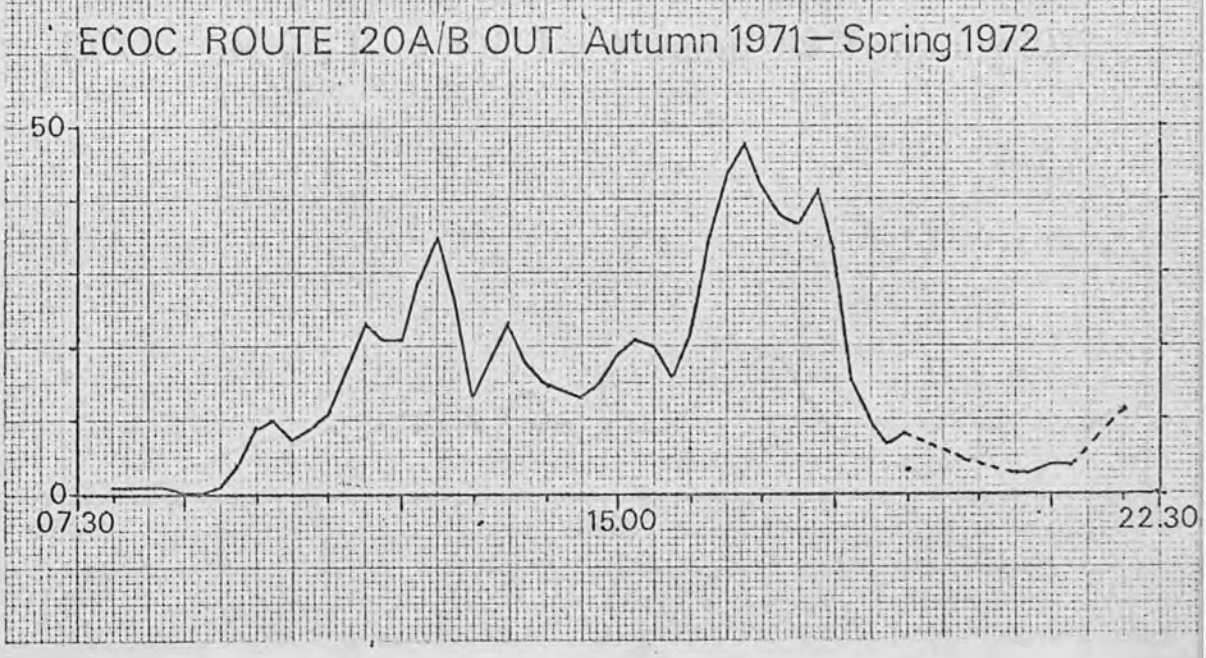


FIG. 16.7A

ECOC ROUTE 3 IN Autumn 1971-Spring 1972

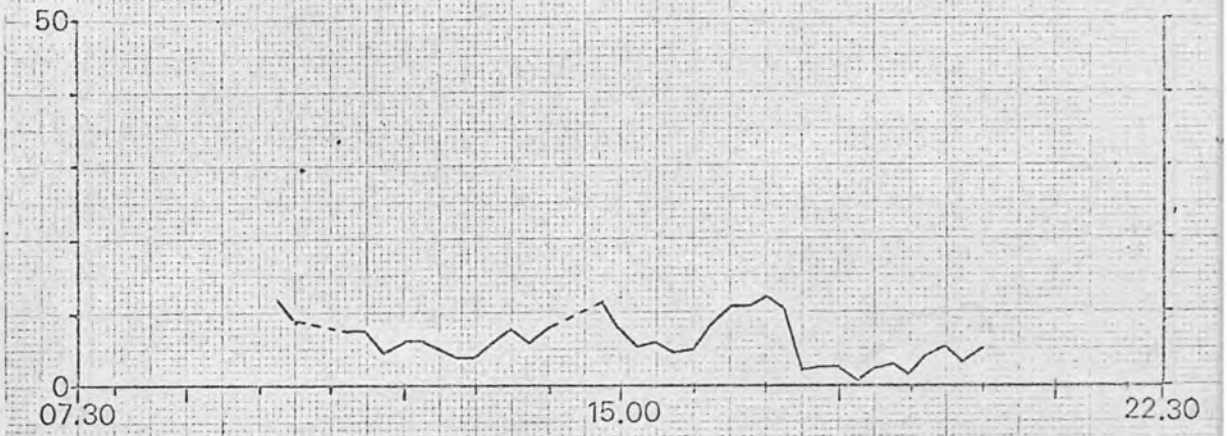


FIG. 16.7B

ECOC ROUTE 3 OUT Autumn 1971-Spring 1972

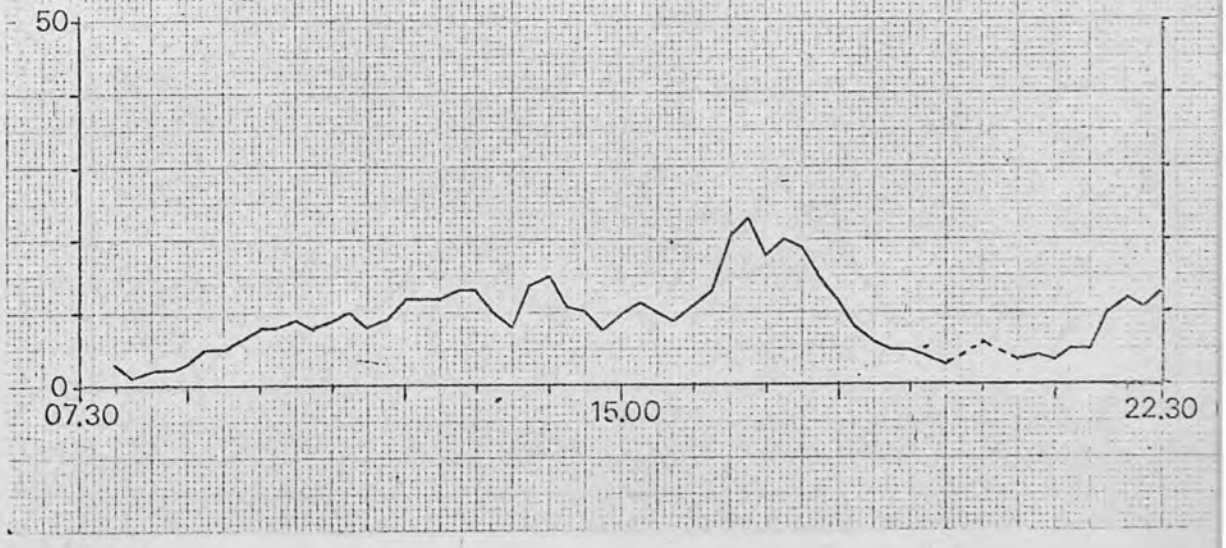


FIG. 16.8A

ECOC ROUTE 3A/B IN Autumn 1971-Spring 1972

FIG. 16.8B

ECOC ROUTE 3A/B OUT Autumn 1971-Spring 1972

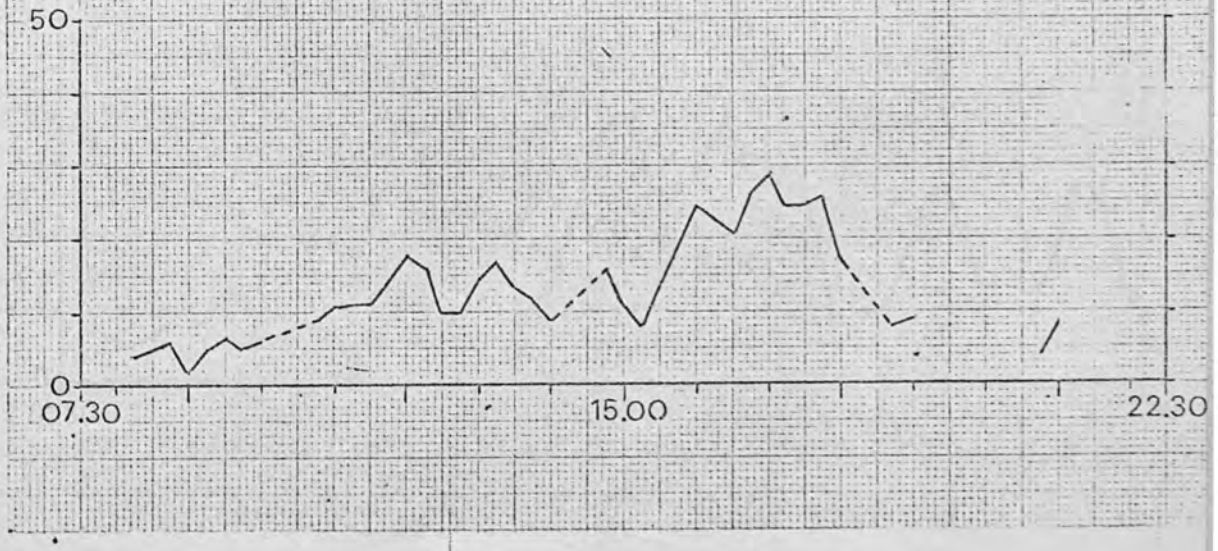


FIG. 16.9A

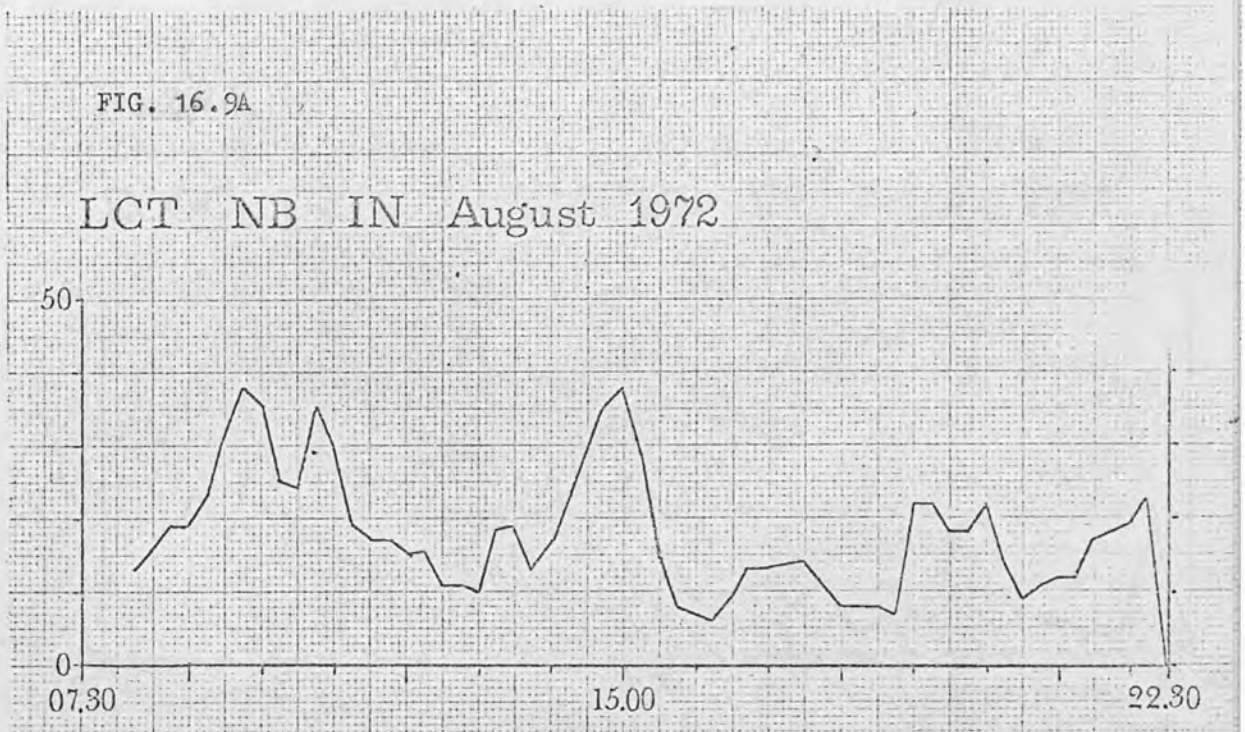


FIG. 16.9B

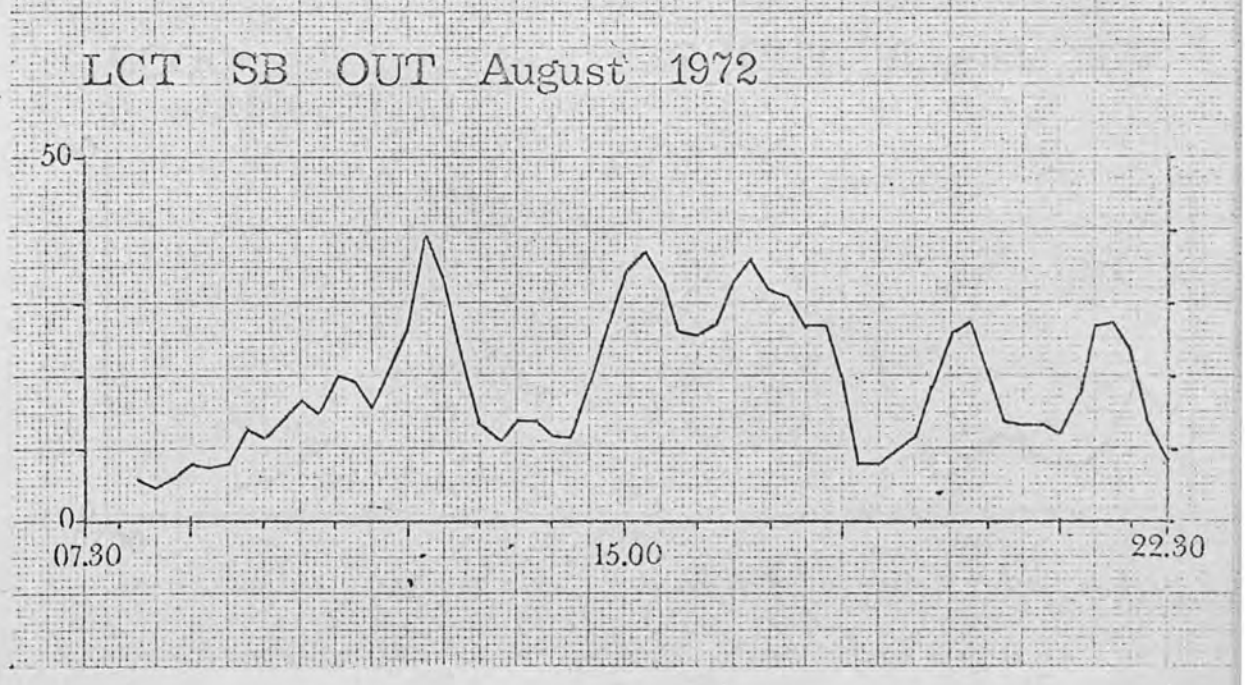


FIG. 16.10A

ECOC URBAN ROUTES IN August 1972

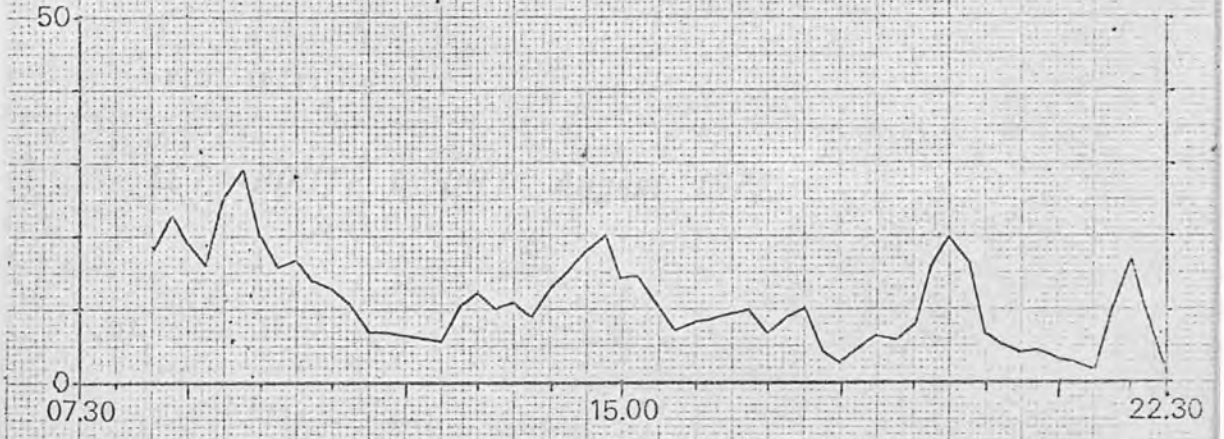


FIG. 16.10B

ECOC URBAN ROUTES OUT August 1972

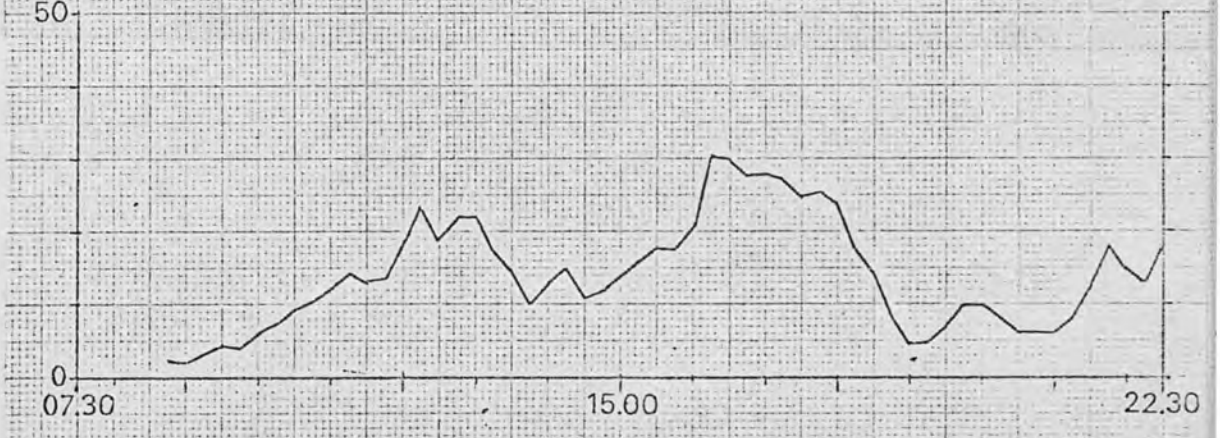


FIG. 16.11

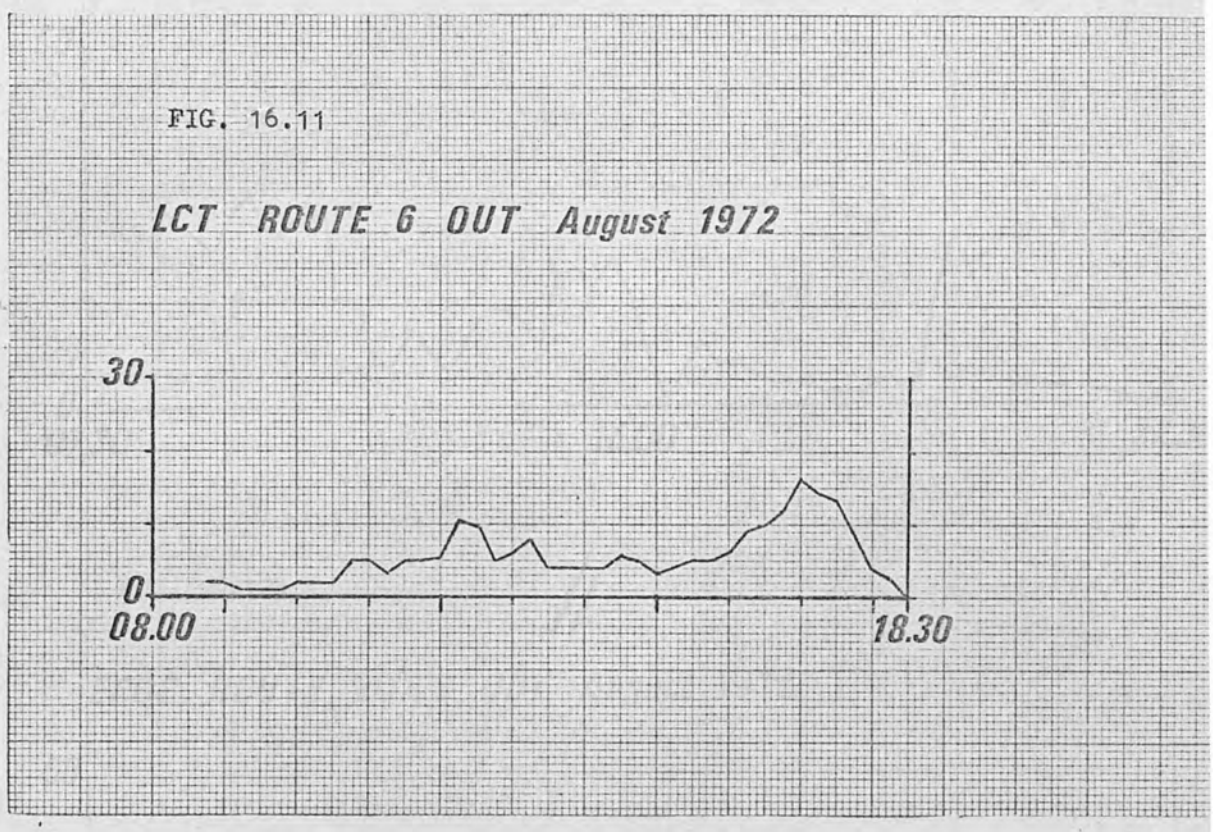


FIG. 16.12A

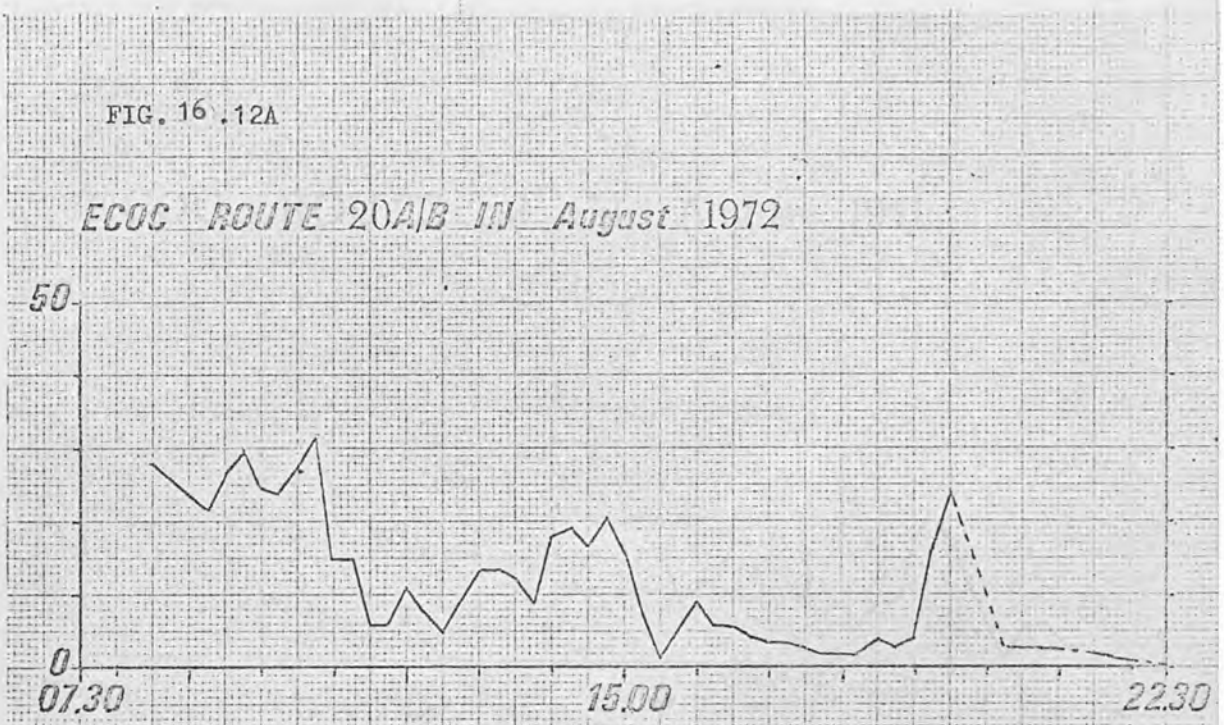


FIG. 16.12B

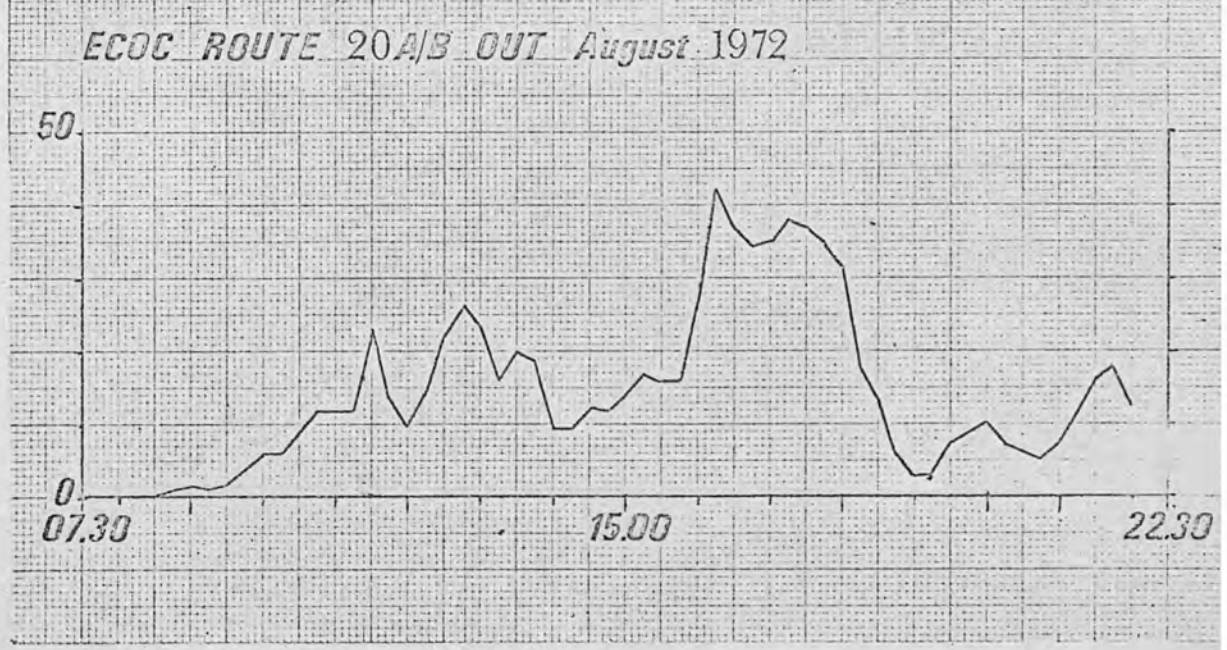


FIG. 16.13A

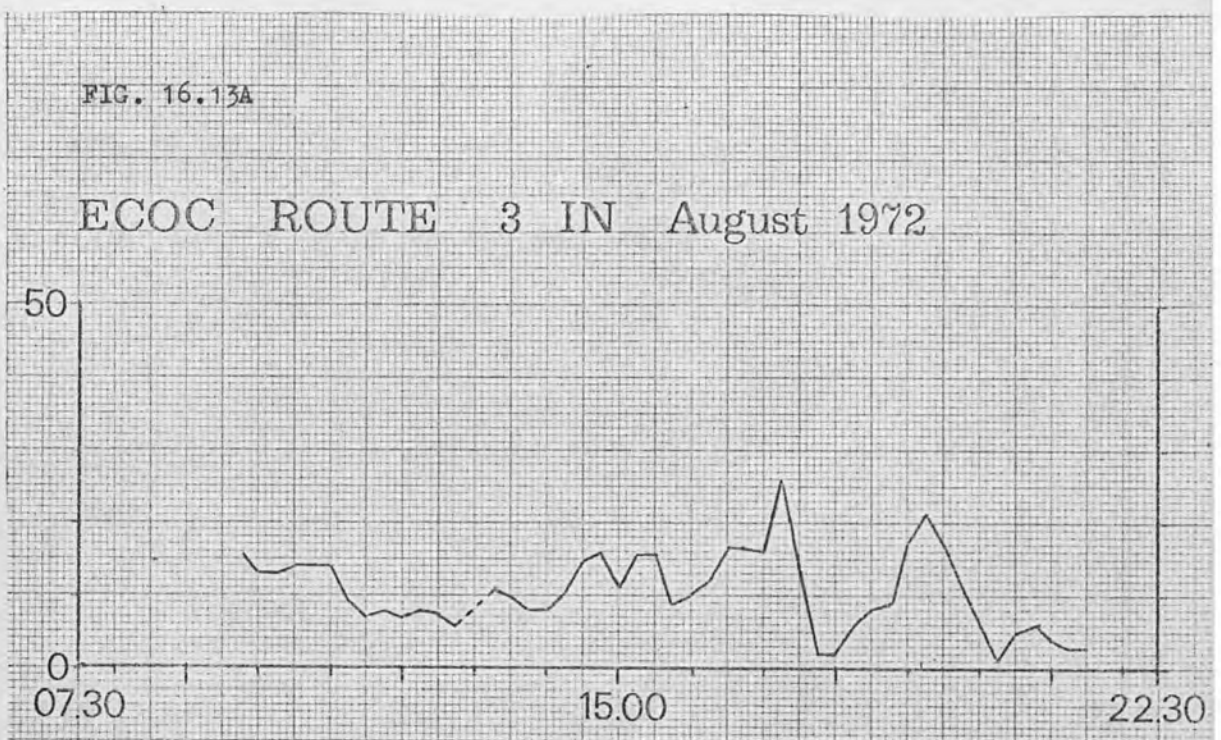


FIG. 16.13B

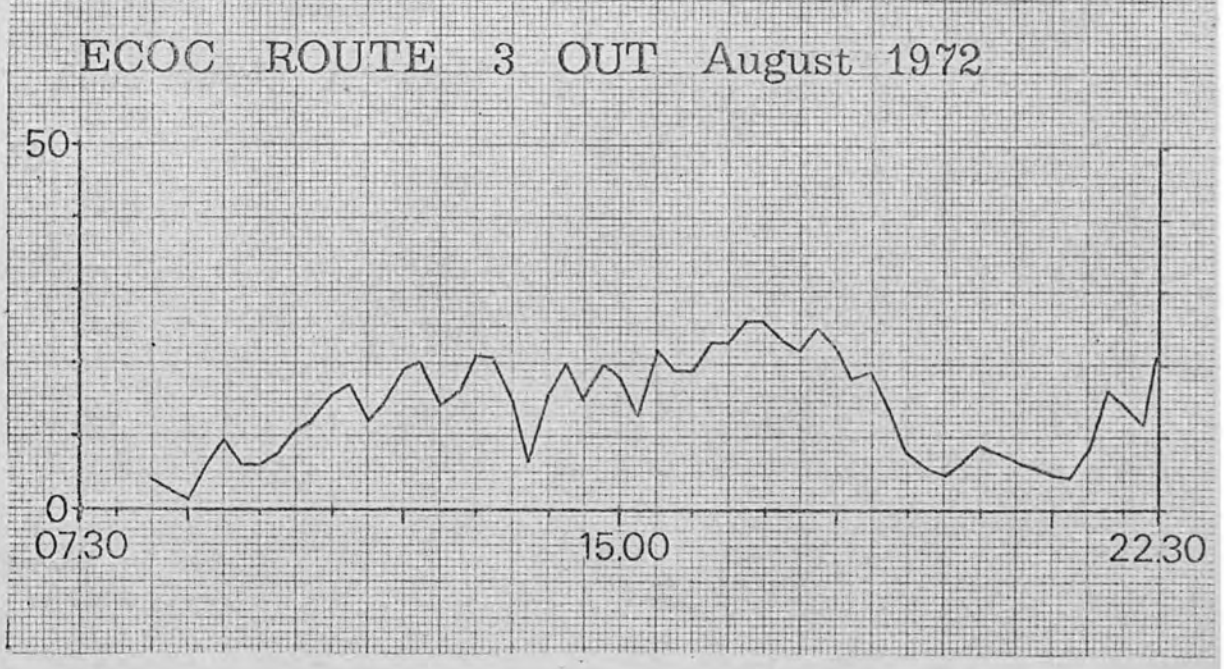


FIG. 16.14A

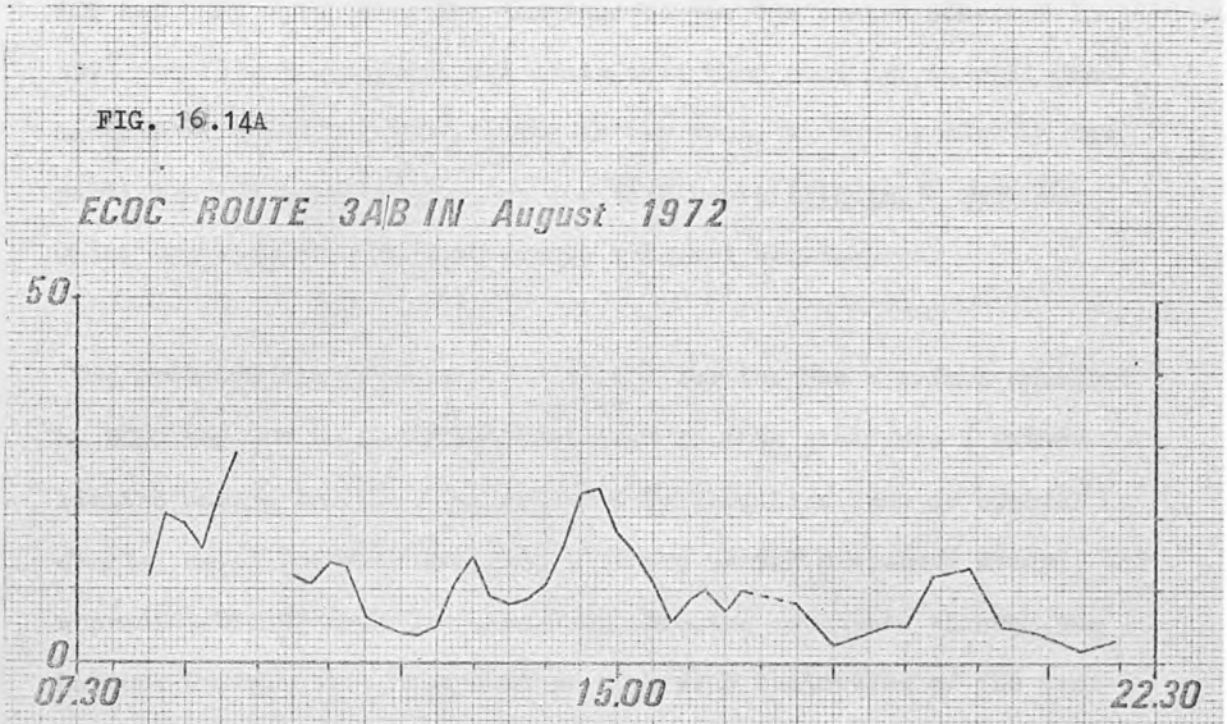
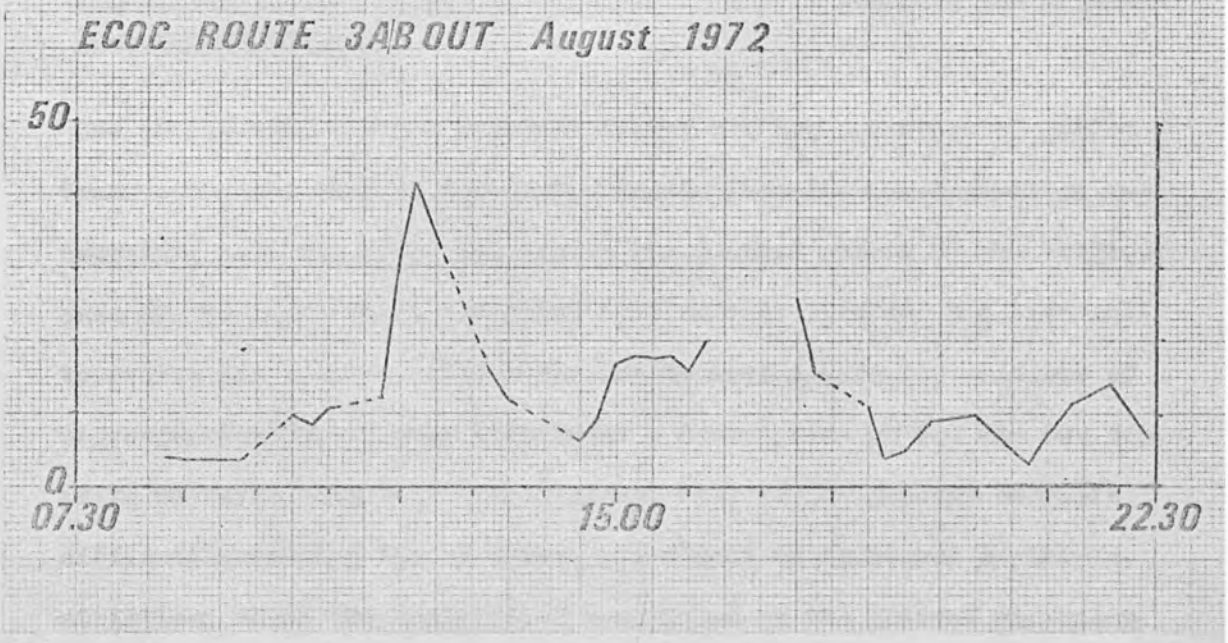


FIG. 16.14B



3A/B and £1709 for service 21 to ensure their continued operation (3*). Following discussions between ECOC and Lowestoft Town Council the company agreed to postpone a final decision on the future of the two routes until the negotiations which were in progress between ECOC and LCT had been concluded. The loadings on the two routes observed in 1971 and 1972 did support the claim that they were not as well used as some of the other ECOC routes in the town, as may be seen on the partially completed graphs for the 3A/B route (figs 16.8 - 16.14), which was operating on a 20 minute interval service.

So, although the recordings of demand for the bus services operated by ECOC and LCT in Lowestoft contained in this study are a rather limited sample and are thus affected by anomalies such as special events, which generate exceptional short period passenger demand, and unpredictable disruptions caused by shipping movements through the harbour bridge, they nevertheless give some indication of the similarities and differences in the pattern of demand for the public transport facilities provided by the two operators.

Competition Between the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company and Lowestoft Corporation Transport.

One of the more serious problems facing the two operators of public transport facilities in Lowestoft results from the development of two competing networks of routes within the limited extent of the built-up area of the town, which has meant that neither operator has been able to evolve the optimum route structure to meet developing patterns of passenger demand. Chapter 3 includes a description of how the two separate networks came to be established. Many of the present economic difficulties facing the operators are direct consequences of the restrictions which the competition has placed on the natural expansion of, and alterations to, the existing route structures. Some local

authorities in other parts of Britain were able to come to terms with other public transport operators in their areas many years ago (see p 166) and others have been able to freely embark on comprehensive route reorganisations (see p 166) but Lowestoft had made little progress in either field by mid 1973.

The conflict of interests between the bus operators in Lowestoft stems from the manner in which the two systems developed in response to the gradual growth in the built-up area of the town. Following the last war there was little development of either network until the 1960s, when the pace of growth of peripheral housing estates began to put pressure on the long established route patterns. In some cases it was found possible to serve new estates by means of simple extensions to existing routes. This feature is typical of the expansion of LCT facilities, with several short extensions radiating from the two former tram termini, partly due to restrictions placed on the expansion of LCT facilities in the west of the town where ECOC was the established operator. ECOC also had to suffer severe restrictions, as its routes which used the A12 trunk road within the borough boundary were forbidden to carry short distance passengers in competition with the established LCT service along the road. An almost complete lack of agreement and accommodation between the two operators has meant that whenever one or other has made an attempt to alter its route pattern to meet changing demand, severe friction has resulted, which has become steadily more heated as the need for drastic changes has grown.

The first major confrontation between the two operators resulted from the decision taken by LCT in September 1968 to seek permission from the Eastern Area Traffic Commissioners to introduce a new bus service, which would extend the corporation's area of operation to

the west of the A12 in the town centre. The proposal was for the introduction of a service to run from the Central Railway Station to Gunton Estate in the north of the town, vis Norwich Road and Hollingsworth Road, neither of which had an existing bus service,(route 6 on LCT map). This proposal followed shortly after negotiations between the corporation and ECOC, which considered the possibility of merging the two operators' services in the town, had failed to reach any agreement. In support of its claim that there was a need for the new service the corporation explained that it was necessary in order to help reduce traffic congestion in the London Road North shopping centre (part of the A12). However the proposal aroused strong opposition from ECOC. At the Traffic Commissioners' hearing of the application, held in January 1969, an ECOC representative accused the corporation of trying to undermine the viability of the company's services in the town "in a fit of pique" (4*).The Commissioners decided in favour of the new service, with a few minor alterations, but ECOC immediately submitted an appeal against the decision.

No sooner had the dispute over the Norwich Road route started to subside than another confrontation arose over conflicting plans for new services to developing housing estates on the outskirts of the town, the Burnt Hill estate in the south-west and the Pound Farm estate near Oulton Village. Both operators applied for routes and at the subsequent Traffic Commissioners' hearing the ECOC representative accused the corporation of being "irresponsible" and "bordering on the frivolous" (5*).The ECOC argument was that the company already served the two areas and it was normal procedure for them to extend their existing routes when estates were built nearby. For the corporation it was explained that; as both estates were within the borough boundary the local authority should be allowed to provide the transport services required, especially as the gradual westward movement

of the town's population was affecting the viability of its existing routes. The ECOC applications were favoured by the Commissioners (6*,7*) because the company was the established operator in the two areas, following usual precedence in such decisions.

The ECOC appeal against the LCT service 6 came before the Traffic Commissioners in July 1969 and the acrimony that had arisen between the two operators was even more in evidence (8*). The ECOC representative submitted that the route would abstract traffic and revenue from the company as "it would run right through Eastern Counties territory which they had served properly for fifty years", and also that there was no public need whatsoever for its introduction. In defence of the new route the corporation representative expressed the view that; "they (Eastern Counties) want to restrict us entirely to a north-south run on the A12". Although the new route was eventually confirmed a number of restrictions were placed on the siting of bus stops, to protect existing ECOC routes which were to be crossed in several places. As a result of these restrictions, a half mile section in the centre of the new route has no stops because it is too close to parts of ECOC routes 3/3D and 3A/B. The hearing was reported to have cost the corporation, and hence the town's ratepayers an estimated £800.

The period of conflict between LCT and ECOC during most of 1968 and 1969 was followed in October 1970 by proposals for sweeping changes in the entire network of bus services in the town and a joint meeting between the two operators was arranged for the same month (9*). The local authority's objective was for an arrangement in which there would be a redistribution of routes "from scratch" so that the corporation would operate 60% of the town's bus services, (according to the ECOC representative at the appeal against the LCT service 6 the

company operated 521,000 miles per year in the town and LCT 367,000 miles). Unfortunately the co-ordination talks again failed to reach an agreement and no progress was made towards the integration of competing and overlapping bus routes.

The October 1970 talks followed shortly after very strong criticism of the pattern of bus services in the town by Lowestoft Trades Council. The council had concluded that; (10*)

"In only a few instances do the buses provide links between the principal residential areas and the larger concentrations of industry. So the choice of travelling to work by bus does not exist for a large number of workers in the town - and this misses what must be a considerable source of income for any transport undertaking".

Additional criticisms raised by the trades council were that the existing bus services in Lowestoft were totally inadequate for both recreational needs and school transport.

The self enforced separateness of the two public transport systems in Lowestoft means that potential passengers are denied the overall route structure that would best meet the needs of the majority of the town's population. It is virtually impossible for industrial employees with residences in many parts of the town to use public transport for regular journeys to work unless they change vehicles at least once, usually at Lowestoft Central station. The need to change vehicles greatly increases both travelling time and inconvenience and could be one of the reasons for the choice of two-wheeled transport for such journeys by a high proportion of the town's working population.

The tables of 'Working Population by Means of Transport to Work' of the 1966 partial census confirm that two-wheeled transport to work is

much more important in Lowestoft than in most towns, for example Ipswich, where bus routes are almost entirely under the control of the local authority. The table below (table 16.3) gives extracts from the 'Means of Transport to Work' table for East Suffolk. A full table is included in Chapter 17 (table 17.3).

Table 16.3 Extract From 'Working Population by Means of Transport to Work' Table of 1966 Partial Census.

Lowestoft			Ipswich		
Mode of Travel	Number	Percentage of Total	Mode of Travel	Number	Percentage of Total
Bus	2,740	12·6	Bus	11,670	22·0
Bicycle	6,970	32·1	Bicycle	12,180	22·9
Motor-Cycle	1,380	6·4	Motor-Cycle	4,760	9·0
Total for Above	11,090	51·1	Total for Above	28,610	53·9

The census figures in the above table are confirmed by the sample traffic counts taken at the Lowestoft bridges, which also recorded a high percentage of two-wheeled traffic.

All parties interested in the provision of public passenger transport facilities in Lowestoft have come to agree that a substantial reorganisation of bus routes is now essential but, unfortunately they have failed to agree on the manner in which such a reorganisation should take place. The following section suggests an outline of a way in which such a comprehensive reorganisation might be effected.

Outline for Possible Restructuring of Public Transport Network In Lowestoft.

The distribution of residential and industrial districts in Lowestoft is shown on the following map (fig16.15) and the accompanying map (fig16.16)shows all the roads in the town covered by the combined bus systems of LCT and ECOC. Many of the problems and shortcomings of the present system have already been described in the previous chapter, and the lack of co-operation between the two operators has been stressed. If an agreement could be reached between them then much needed improvements to the route network could be speedily introduced. Changes in the route pattern would need to take into account the present and probable future spatial relationships of important traffic generators, such as; industrial complexes, shopping centres, railway connections, holiday and recreational centres and residential developments. The two-fold division of the town caused by the presence of the Inner Harbour - Oulton Broad waterway will continue to be an important limiting factor in any reorganisation of the town's transport facilities, even if a third crossing is eventually constructed.

The study of existing bus services in Lowestoft (previous section) concludes that a drastic reorganisation is now necessary. This should be preceded by a detailed market survey of existing and possible potential public transport users but, failing this, some ideas of the form a completely recast bus route network might take are given below. The map (fig16.17)and the related table (table 16.4) suggest the layout which a new network might form. One continuous numbered sequence of routes is used, progressing in a clockwise direction and centred on the Central Railway Station. In addition to the suggested town services it is envisaged that the existing ECOC routes serving areas outside the town boundary should be allowed to work without restrictions

on local journeys.

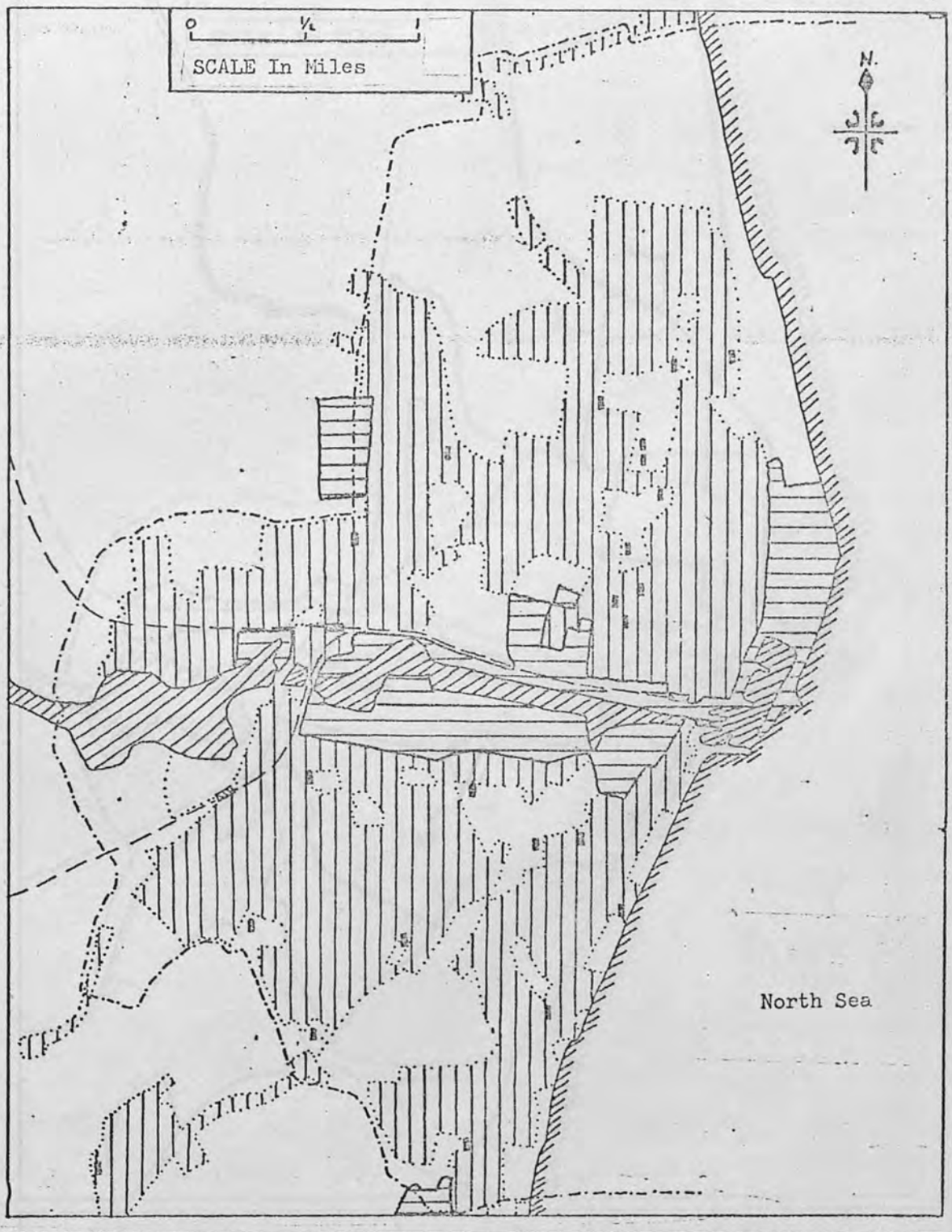
Factors which would have a considerable effect on the future development of the bus route network in Lowestoft and which are not taken into account in the accompanying proposals include; the possibility of a third harbour crossing approximately half-way between the two existing crossings and the probable closure of London Road North shopping centre to all traffic, including public transport,

A network of bus services in Lowestoft based on the proposals in table 16.4 would have a number of important advantages over the town's present route structure. The proposed unified route number series would overcome confusion caused by the two separate and unrelated number series now in use. Joint working of all routes would mean that waiting passengers would no longer have to watch empty vehicles pass because restrictions on competition do not allow them to stop. Recent suburban residential and industrial developments would be served by the most economical and direct route possible, rather than hastily contrived adjustments of existing routes. The need to change vehicles at the town centre would be reduced by the introduction of cross-town routes serving the major industrial areas, thus making public transport more attractive for journeys to work.

A number of towns in Britain have already found that a restructuring of bus services has brought beneficial results and there seems to be every reason to expect that the same would be the outcome if Lowestoft were to follow a similar course.

FIG. 16.15

LOWESTOFT LAND USE MAP. DECEMBER 1971

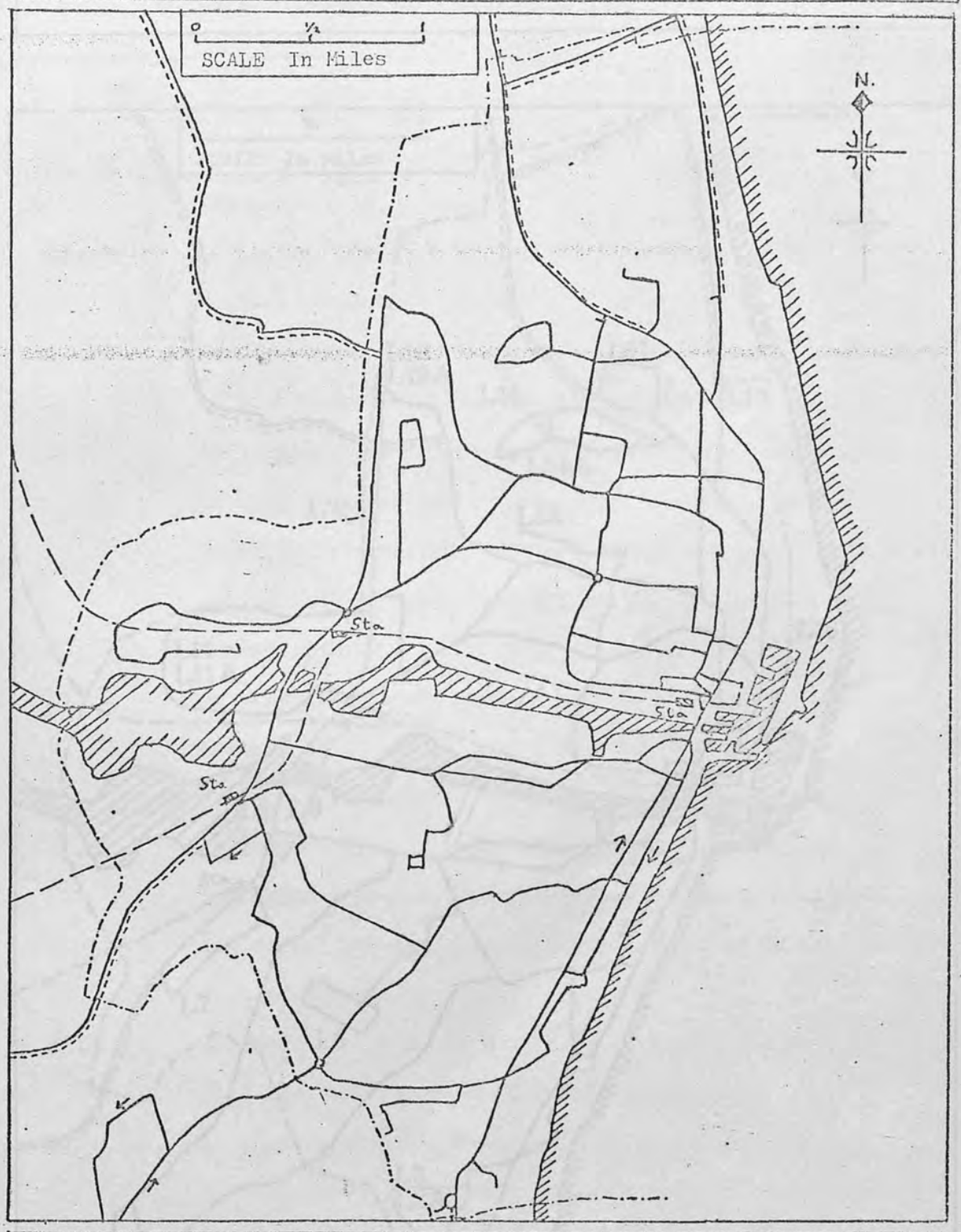


KEY

Water
Industry
Housing
Open Space
Borough Boundary
Railway Lines
School

FIG. 16.16

LOWESTOFT AREA BUS ROUTE NETWORK AT DECEMBER 1971. COMBINED SERVICES.

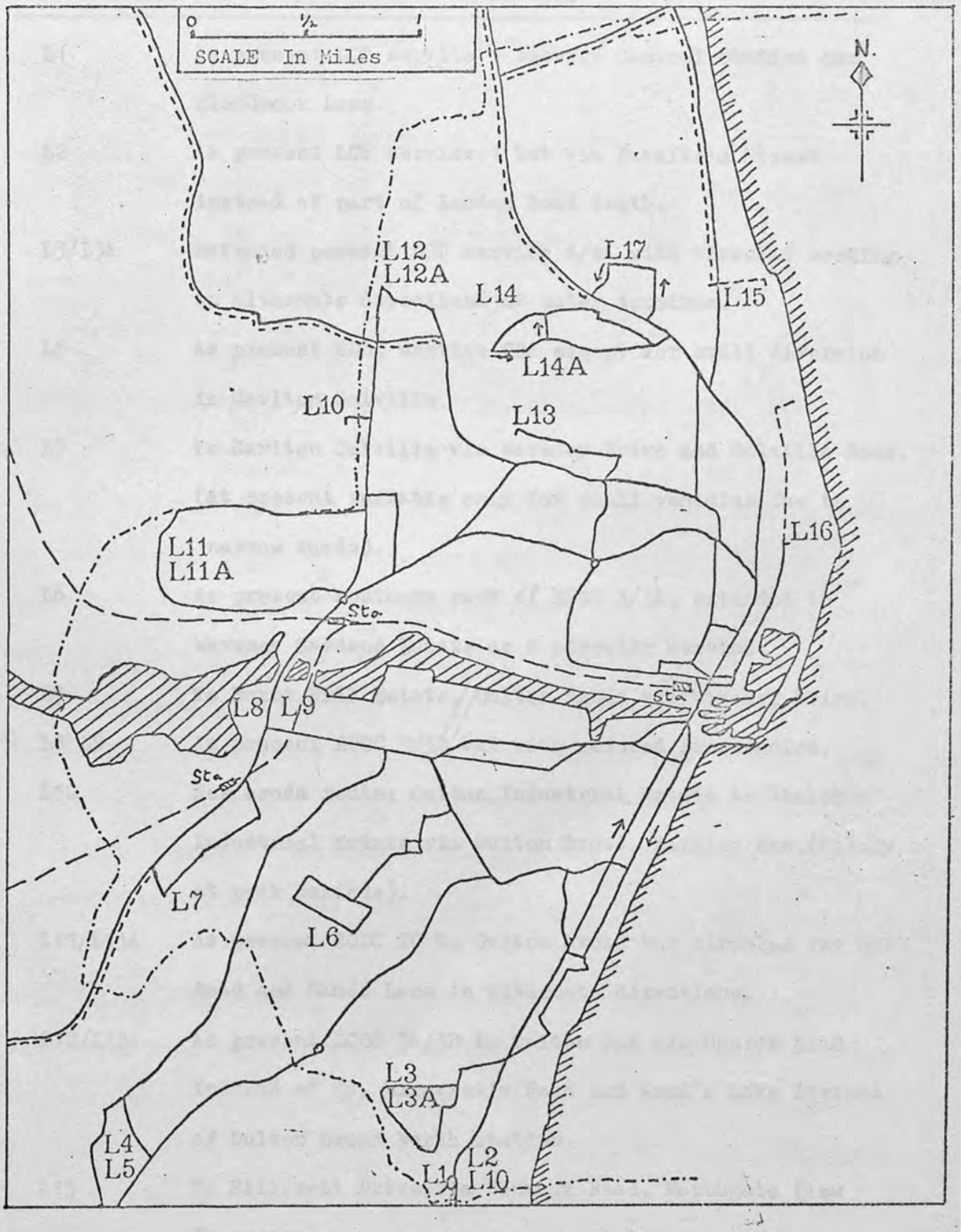


KEY (For route numbers see figs. 16.2 and 16.3).

- Borough Boundary
- Railway Lines
- Bus Routes (One Way Routes in Direction Indicated)
- Bus Route Seasonal
- External Bus Routes

FIG. 16.17

LOWESTOFT AREA POSSIBLE BUS ROUTE NETWORK FOR ONE MAJOR OPERATOR.



FOR KEY SEE FIG. 16.16.

Table 16.4 Possible Restructured Public Transport Network for the Borough of Lowestoft. (see Fig 16.17).

Route Number	Details
L1	As present LCT service 1 between Central Station and Bloodmoor Lane.
L2	As present LCT service 1 but via Pakefield Street instead of part of London Road South.
L3/L3A	Extended present LCT service 4/4A with circular working in alternate directions at outer terminus.
L4	As present ECOC service 20A except for small diversion in Carlton Colville.
L5	To Carlton Colville via Waveney Drive and Colville Road. (At present suitable only for small vehicles due to narrow roads).
L6	As present southern part of ECOC 3/3A, extended to Waveney Gardens Estate as a circular service.
L7	To Burnt Hill Estate, Oulton Broad via Waveney Drive.
L8 L9	As present ECOC 3/3D but with reduced frequencies.
L10	New cross route: Oulton Industrial Estate to Gisleham Industrial Estate via Oulton Broad, Kirkley Run.(Mainly at peak periods).
L11/L11A	As present ECOC 20 to Oulton Broad but circular via Hall Road and Sands Lane in alternate directions.
L12/L12A	As present ECOC 3A/3B to Oulton but via Church Road instead of St. Margaret's Road and Wood's Loke instead of Oulton Broad North station.
L13	To Hillcrest Drive via Denmark Road, Northgate (low frequency).
L14/L14A	As present LCT 9/9A but circular via Spashett Road and Europa Road at outer terminus.

L15 As present LCT 2 with summer extension to North Sea Wall and North Beach.

L16 To Crown Score via Whapload Road.(Mainly peak periods works service, with possible summer seasonal extension to Sparrow's Nest Gardens).

L17 As present LCT 5 but via St. Peter's Street and circular via Church Lane at outer terminus.

Present ECOC routes to and from Great Yarmouth, Kessingland, Southwold, Mutford, Beccles, Bungay and Norwich would be allowed to carry local passengers.

Problems of Public Passenger Transport Provision in Lowestoft - Conclusions.

The study of the problems involved in the provision of omnibus services in the Borough of Lowestoft has found strong evidence that many of the problems which are currently affecting nearly all transport operators in Britain are present in Lowestoft too. The growth in the use of cars for journeys in the town has abstracted some traffic from public transport as well as causing severe congestion at peak periods. Cost inflation has also been increasingly felt, causing fares to rise and increasing passenger resistance, which has meant that private transport has become even more attractive.

The recent acceptance of the principle of subsidisation of bus services from rate income has resulted from the local authority's realisation that financial viability is now almost impossible for any reasonably priced public transport service. (In the 1972-73 financial year LCT services lost £16,688 despite a grant of £14,768 towards the cost of cheap passes for elderly and infirm passengers.)

The problems which stem from local geographical and historical circumstances: the growth of two competing networks of bus routes, the physical barrier of the Inner Harbour and the ways in which land-use patterns have changed in relation to existing public transport facilities, typify the type of complex pattern of factors which influence the development of public transport services in urban areas throughout Britain. As well as these factors, perhaps the most important consideration to be taken into account when proposals are made to alter the existing pattern of public transport facilities is, whether they would lead to a system more in accord with the actual needs of the travelling public. Hopefully the suggestions for a recast network in Lowestoft put forward in this chapter go some way towards meeting these needs more fully than the existing route structures of the two competing operators, by more efficiently connecting residential, industrial and commercial districts and, by providing for services which follow logical route paths rather than those which have grown up as a result of historical accidents and lack of enterprise on the part of the operators.

Lowestoft's public transport operators have not yet had to contend with some of the problems which have arisen in many larger urban centres. Although there is congestion at peak periods, at most other times traffic movement is relatively free. The operators have not had to provide many extra vehicles for rush-hour services and most passengers are still able to board the first bus which comes along at peak times. However, as the town expands there is the danger that these problems will increase unless local planners ensure that the orderly evolution of public transport facilities in the way which best meets the needs of the travelling public is recognized as their primary objective.

References.

1. 'Outline Plan For Lowestoft', County Planning Officer, July 1950.

2. 'Lowestoft Central Area Draft Plan', County Planning Officer, 1965.

3. Lowestoft Journal, 4/6/71.

4. Lowestoft Journal, 17/1/69. The ECOC representative estimated that the new service would lose £7250 a year.

5. Lowestoft Journal, 28/2/69. "Like Rip van Winkle, he (ECOC representative) said, the Corporation had been asleep for more than 30 years and they had woken up only since the breakdown of last year's negotiations."

6. Lowestoft Journal, 14/3/69.

7. P D Long, 'Lowestoft Aspirations Curbed', Buses, June 1969.

8. Lowestoft Journal, 18/7/69.

9. Lowestoft Journal, 2/10/70. "Hints of progress in the talks were given to a meeting of Lowestoft Transport Committee yesterday when it was also reported that a special working party was trying to sort out town centre traffic congestion so that bus services could be speeded up. Mr B W Selby asked 'Where are we getting to? We keep on hearing about these talks but is the whole thing going to come to another stalemate?'"

10. Lowestoft Journal, 18/9/70.

SECTION 5: Supplementary Material and Conclusions.

CHAPTER 17.

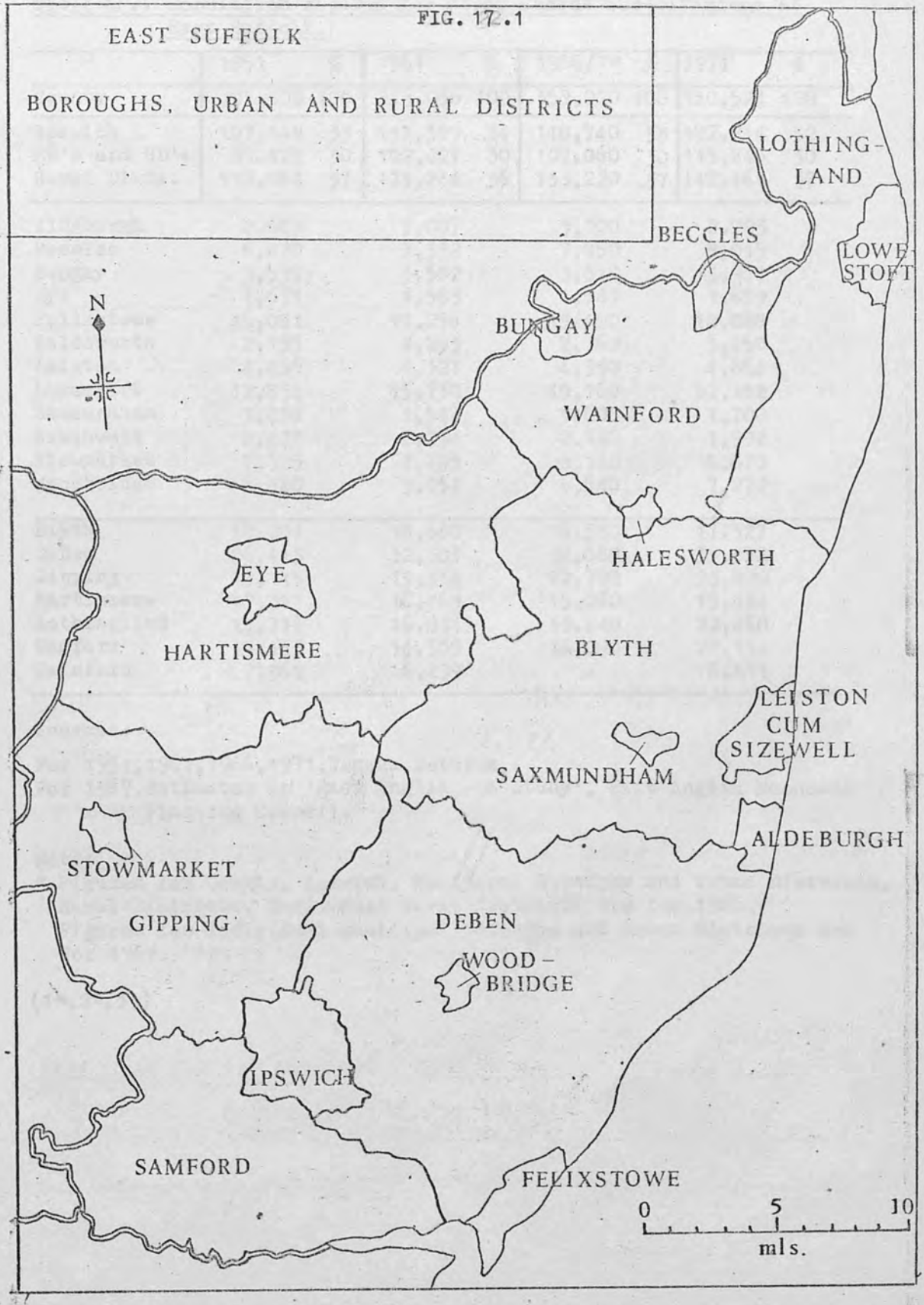
The Effects of Population Changes on the Demand for Public Transport Facilities in East Suffolk.

The principal census sub-divisions of East Suffolk are shown on the map (fig 17.1). They include county and municipal boroughs, urban and rural districts. The extent to which the populations of these census districts has changed in recent decades provides a guide to whether the present level of demand for public transport facilities is likely to be maintained in future years. The inclusion of tables of working population by means of transport to work as from the 1966 partial census will be even more useful in showing trends in this field in future. The population figures may be used to find examples of; small towns and villages with declining or static populations - where the gradual overall trend towards private transport is likely to result in severe economic problems for the remaining public transport services, and also of towns with fast rising populations - the towns along the East Suffolk railway line being especially significant in this respect.

The populations of the major census sub-divisions of East Suffolk in the three census years 1951, 1961 and 1971 are shown below (table 17.1). The table shows that the county as a whole has experienced a steady increase in population since the war. The dominant status of Ipswich is reflected by the fact that the town has maintained a population level of roughly one-third of the total for the county as a whole. The remaining two-thirds has remained almost equally divided between the twelve urban census districts and the seven rural districts.

Although the county as a whole has had a steady population growth in recent decades, the rate of growth has been far from uniform in

FIG. 17.1


EAST SUFFOLK
BOROUGHS, URBAN AND RURAL DISTRICTS
LOTHING-
LAND
BECCLES
LOWE-
STOFT
N
BUNGAY
WAINFORD
HALESWORTH
EYE
HARTISMERE
BLYTH
LEISTON
CUM
SIZEWELL
SAXMUNDHAM
ALDEBURGH
STOWMARKET
GIPPING
DEBEN
WOOD-
BRIDGE
IPSWICH
SAMFORD
FELIXSTOWE
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5
10
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Table 17.1 Population Figures for Major Census Sub-Divisions of East Suffolk.

	1951	%	1961	%	1966/7*	%	1971	%
County	321,909	100	343,056	100	359,020	100	380,524	100
Ipswich	107,418	33	117,395	34	118,740	33	122,814	32
MB's and UD's	95,427	30	102,427	30	107,060	30	115,246	30
Rural Dists.	119,064	37	123,234	36	133,220	37	142,464	37
Aldeburgh	2,689		3,007		3,100		2,793	
Beccles	6,870		7,332		7,850		8,015	
Bungay	3,535		3,582		3,810		3,961	
Eye	1,631		1,583		1,640		1,659	
Felixstowe	15,081		17,296		19,490		18,888	
Halesworth	2,155		2,253		2,760		3,250	
Leiston	4,056		4,121		4,990		4,864	
Lowestoft	42,834		45,730		49,160		52,182	
Saxmundham	1,438		1,543		1,600		1,700	
Southwold	2,473		2,234		2,140		1,992	
Stowmarket	7,325		7,795		8,160		8,670	
Woodbridge	5,340		5,951		6,540		7,272	
Blyth	19,281		18,600		18,580		17,527	
Deben	26,413		32,309		34,880		35,888	
Gipping	19,115		19,314		22,700		23,800	
Hartismere	17,317		16,169		15,260		15,824	
Lothingland	14,716		16,034		19,240		22,460	
Samford	15,153		14,509		16,090		20,154	
Wainford	7,069		6,299		-		6,811	

Sources:

For 1951,1961,1966,1971.Census returns.
For 1967.Estimates in 'East Anglia - A Study', East Anglia Economic Planning Council.

Note:
* Figures for County, Ipswich, Municipal Boroughs and Urban Districts, Rural Districts, Individual rural districts are for 1966. Figures for Individual municipal boroughs and urban districts are for 1967.

(1*,2*,3*)

all the census districts. The rates of growth of each of the census sub-divisions is shown in table 17.2.

Table 17.2 Percentage Population Changes For East Suffolk Census Districts.

District	% Change 1951-61	% Change 1961-71	District	% Change 1951-61	% Change 1961-71
COUNTY	+6·6	+10·9	Aldeburgh	+11·8	-7·1
Ipswich	+9·3	+4·6	Beccles	+6·7	+9·3
MBs and UDs	+7·3	+12·5	Bungay	+1·3	+10·6
RDs	+3·5	+15·6	Eye	-2·9	+11.1
			Felixstowe	+14·7	+9·2
Rural Districts			Halesworth	+4·5	+44·3
Blyth	-3·5	-5·8	Leiston	+1·6	+18·0
Deben	+22·3	+11·1	Lowestoft	+6·8	+14·1
Gipping	+1·0	+23·2	Saxmundham	+7·3	+10·2
Hartismere	-6·6	-2·1	Southwold	-9·7	-10·8
Lothingland	+9·0	+40·1	Stowmarket	+6·4	+11·2
Samford	-4·2	+38·9	Woodbridge	+11·4	+12·2
Wainford	-10·9	+ 8·1			

Only three of the towns listed in the tables have any significant urban public transport facilities; Ipswich, Lowestoft and Felixstowe. The three towns have experienced a regular growth in population over the ten year period 1961-71 and so more potential public transport users.

Population Changes and Rural Public Tramsport.

The total population of the seven rural districts in East Suffolk has expanded more rapidly than that of the urban districts, so the decline in rural public transport patronage throughout the county is not the result of rural depopulation alone but must be largely attributable to the general movement towards private transportation. However, the overall rise in population recorded in the rural census

districts conceals the fact that the greater part of the increase is not in actual rural areas but rather in dormitory villages of nearby towns, especially around Ipswich, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, where borough boundary adjustments have not kept pace with the rapid pace of suburban residential development. So, even in the rural census districts where there has been an overall population increase, those parts most remote from urban influence have, in fact, either maintained a static population or experienced a population decline. This feature is reflected by the fact that the rural census districts adjoining large towns, namely Lothingland (Lowestoft) and Samford (Ipswich), have had exceptionally large population increases, whereas the more isolated rural districts, such as Blyth and Hartismere, have had a steady loss of population. Blyth and Hartismere are two districts were bus services have already been reduced to a very low level and several recent route withdrawals have left only a skeleton service in some parts, much of which is supported by local authority grants.

So, although those parts of the rural census districts situated near to the larger towns are steadily increasing their populations, so that demand for public transport facilities is likely to remain relatively stable, the more remote areas are slowly declining in population and thus demand for public transport facilities, to the extent that the maintenance of any level of public transport is likely to become an even more difficult problem in the future.

Population Changes and the East Suffolk Railway Line.

Apart from the two terminal towns of Ipswich and Lowestoft, four of the urban census districts in East Suffolk are located along the East Suffolk Line; Beccles, Halesworth, Saxmundham and Woodbridge (see fig 2.1). The total population of these four small towns rose from 17,079 in 1961 to 20,237 in 1971 (an increase of 18·5%), at a rate much

higher than for the MBs and UDs in the county as a whole. The growth of Halesworth in particular has been dramatic, although even after a 44% increase between 1961 and 1971 the total population of the town was still less than 4,000. The highest numerical increase in population of the four towns has been at Woodbridge, where the 1961-71 change was +1,321 persons. The towns of Aldeburgh and Leiston are situated on a branch of the East Suffolk Line which was closed to passengers in 1966 and, although the population increased in Leiston by an above average percentage between 1961 and 1971, more detailed figures show that there has been a slight decline since 1967 (see table17.1). A much more marked decline seems to have started at Aldeburgh at about the same time, which suggests that the withdrawal of the railway facilities may have had some influence on population movements, especially as many Aldeburgh residents are 'arty' types, who would prefer good links with London.

If the four towns situated on the East Suffolk Line are considered together with Leiston and Aldeburgh, with the addition of Southwold and Bungay, for which the line is the nearest rail facility, then the combined population of 33,847 for the 1971 census returns compares with 30,623 in 1961. The steady expansion of the intermediate towns on the East Suffolk Line gives weight to the argument that the line will remain a socially very desirable facility for the foreseeable future.

Census Information on Means of Transport to Work.

The 1966 sample census of Great Britain included information about the principal means of transport used for journeys to work of the residents of each census district. It is possible to use this information to find the relative importance of each public and private mode of transport for journeys to work by the working population of East Suffolk (1*). The table below (table 17.3) shows the division between

the various modes of transport for the major census districts of East Suffolk and the following table (table 17.4) shows how use of public transport for journeys to work is related to town size.

The two tables show clearly the contrast between urban and rural districts in the proportion of workers who use public transport for the main part of their journeys. It is also clear that the larger urban centres have a higher overall proportion of work journeys by public transport than the smaller towns. The statistics seem to indicate that the actual levels of public transport usage are directly related to the ease of access to it. For example, the smaller towns with railway stations, ie. Saxmundham and Halesworth, have relatively high levels of rail work journeys, although absolute numbers are low. On the other hand Bungay, which is not situated within easy reach of rail facilities, had no rail trips recorded by the census.

The ease of access to the relatively dense network of bus routes in the larger towns, due to the nucleation of both residences and work-places, has resulted in the much greater use of bus services than in the smaller towns and rural districts, where bus services are much less convenient than in the towns for the majority of residents. The proportion of bus users in Ipswich was found to be almost twice as high as in any of the other census districts in the county. This may be a direct result of the corporation's policy of providing special works journeys to and from the town's larger factory complexes.

Bus travellers recorded at Ipswich and Lowestoft and to a lesser extent Felixstowe, were mainly using buses for internal journeys within the towns, whereas residents of the smaller towns used buses more for inter-urban journeys. Those small towns within relatively short distances of larger towns and which have a convenient connecting service,

Table 17.3 Working Population By Means Of Transport to Work.

District	Train	%	Bus	%	Car	%	Goods Vehicle	%	Motor - Cycle	%	Bicycle	%	Foot	%	Total Resident Employed
Ipswich	370	0·7	11,670	22·0	13,440	25·3	1,370	2·6	4,760	9·0	12,180	22·9	7,060	13.1	53,110
Aldeburgh	20	2·5	20	2·5	260	32·5	100	12·5	0	0	110	13·8	160	20·0	800
Beccles	80	2·4	230	6·8	520	15·3	110	3·2	70	2·1	1,140	33·6	970	28·6	3,390
Bungay	0	0	140	9·0	400	25·6	100	6·4	50	3·2	470	30·1	310	19·9	1,560
Eye	10	1·9	10	1·9	170	31·5	30	5·6	10	1·9	80	14·8	170	31·5	540
Felixstowe	90	1·2	710	9·8	2,130	29·4	90	1·2	360	5·0	1,720	23·8	1,390	19·2	7,240
Halesworth	70	5·7	90	7·4	340	27·9	100	8·2	10	0·8	210	17·2	250	20·5	1,220
Leiston	10	0·5	150	7·4	550	27·1	40	2·0	50	2·5	710	35·0	410	20·2	2,030
Lowestoft	420	1·9	2,740	12·6	4,470	20·6	520	2·4	1,380	6·4	6,970	32·1	4,120	19·0	21,730
Saxmundham	50	6·3	70	8·9	190	24·1	30	3·8	20	2·5	90	11·4	270	34·2	790
Southwold	40	5·6	20	2·8	120	16·7	20	2·8	10	1·4	100	14·1	340	47·9	710
Stowmarket	40	1·2	210	6·2	740	21·9	80	2·4	30	0·9	1,190	35·2	960	28·4	3,380
Woodbridge	30	1·1	260	9·3	860	30·7	210	7·5	110	3·9	410	14·6	730	26·1	2,800
Blyth	60	0·8	300	4·1	1,910	26·0	590	8·0	330	4·5	1,510	20·5	1,370	18·6	7,350
Deben	150	1·0	1,720	11·4	5,250	34·9	780	5·2	1,070	7·1	2,390	15·9	1,270	8·4	15,040
Gipping	90	1·0	950	10·0	3,050	32·2	430	4·5	550	5·8	1,880	19·9	1,380	14·7	9,470
Hartismere	80	1·2	220	3·4	1,640	25·5	530	8·3	270	4·2	1,620	25·2	900	14·0	6,420
Lothingland	210	2·5	1,080	12·9	2,580	30·8	350	4·2	550	6·6	2,160	25·8	570	6·8	8,380
Samford	170	2·2	770	10·2	2,210	29·2	280	3·7	370	4·9	1,200	15·9	1,180	15·6	7,560
Wainford	20	0·7	160	5·8	740	26·9	220	8·0	110	4·0	920	33·5	310	11·3	2,750
TOTAL	2,010	1·3	21,520	13·8	41,570	26·6	5,980	3·8	10,110	6·5	32,060	23·7	24,130	15·4	156,270

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% in any case as some workers did not specify one dominant mode of transport to work.

Source: Raw figures from 'Sample Census 1966'. H.M.S.O. 1968. Workplace and Transport Tables Part II. Table 7.

Table 17.4 Use of Public Transport for Journeys to Work. Related to Town Size. At 1966 Sample Census. (1967 Population Figures).

Town	Population	% By Bus	% By Rail	Total % Public	Rank **
Ipswich	121,670	22·0	0·7	22·7	1
Lowestoft	49,160	12·6	1·9	14·5	3
Felixstowe	19,490	9·8	1·2	11·0	5
Stowmarket	8,160	6·2	1·2	7·4	10
Beccles	7,850	6·8	2·4	9·2	7
Woodbridge	6,540	9·3	1·1	10·4	6
Leiston	4,990	7·4	0·5	7·9	11
Bungay	3,810	9·0	0·0	9·0	8
Aldeburgh	3,100	2·5	2·5	5·0	12
Halesworth	2,760	7·4	5·7	13·1	4
Southwold	2,140	2·8	5·6	8·4	9
Eye	1,640	1·9	1·9	3·8	13
Saxmundham	1,600	8·9	6·3	15·2	2

Note: Percentages are for work trips at the 1966 sample census. Population figures were not available for that date and so the 1967 estimates contained in 'East Anglia - A Study' (2*) have been used instead. Resident populations are shown.

** Rank refers to the percentage of each towns working population using public transport for journeys to work. The town with the highest percentage of public transport users is ranked 1, lowest is ranked 13.

recorded the highest levels of bus patronage, especially Woodbridge for journeys to Ipswich and Bungay for journeys to Beccles and Norwich. These two towns each had over 9% of journeys to work undertaken mainly by bus. Conversely, the more remote towns had very low levels of bus patronage recorded, especially Eye, which is the most isolated urban census district in the county, as well as one of the smallest.

Surprisingly the smallest urban district in the county, Saxmundham, recorded the second highest overall percentage of work trips by public transport, at 15% of total work journeys by residents of the town, including high levels of usage of both rail and road public transport facilities. The majority of work journeys originating in Saxmundham were to Ipswich.

It is rather more difficult to draw conclusions about the journey to work travel habits of the inhabitants of the rural districts as the scale of the statistical divisions does not allow for differentiation between the more densely populated areas close to the towns and the true rural areas isolated from the towns. The rural districts adjacent to the larger towns were found to have more journeys to work by bus than those further removed from urban influence. The highest level of bus users was found to be by residents of Lothingland, where there are several large suburban villages with frequent bus services to Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. Rail work journeys originating in the rural districts were found to be low in all cases. The highest percentage of rail journeys was in Lothingland (2·5%), much of which was based on the now closed Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth railway line. The low level of rail usage in the rural districts is a result of the widely spaced character of the surviving rail network and the fact that most of the intermediate stations on the Ipswich to Norwich line were closed in the early 1960s.

The Use of Bicycles For Journeys to Work.

All the census districts in East Suffolk were found to have a very high level of bicycle based journeys to work. The reasons for this would include; low wage levels, the inadequacy of public transport in some areas, the absence of steep hills and the capability of avoiding traffic congestion in the towns. The 1966 census figures for bicycle usage in Lowestoft are confirmed by the traffic counts undertaken in 1970-71 (table 16. 2).

The highest percentages of journeys to work by bicycle were recorded in 1966 at Leiston and Stowmarket, each with 35% of the total for the two towns. The compactness of these small towns means that bicycles are the most convenient and possibly the quickest form of transport for travelling the short distances to local industrial concerns. The census district with the smallest proportion of work journeys by bicycle was found to be Saxmundham (11%). This probably arises from the fact that relatively few residents are employed within the town itself.

Many bicycle trips might be potential public transport trips which are frustrated by factors such as high fare levels, inconvenient bus routes or timetables and town centre traffic congestion. In most of the East Suffolk census districts more people were found to be travelling to work by bicycle than by public transport and in a few cases the bicycle was found to be of greater importance than the motor car.

Conclusions.

The statistics contained in the census returns provide valuable background information for the study of probable future trends in demand

for public transport facilities in East Suffolk. They also help to give an indication of the extent to which existing public transport facilities have succeeded in providing for the needs of the county's travelling population. The results of the 1971 full census will undoubtedly be of immense value, especially as there will be, for the first time, a complete census of modes of transport for journeys to work.

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3. 'Census, England and Wales', H.M.S.O. 1961. County Report for East Suffolk.

CHAPTER 18.

Problems of Public Transport Provision in East Suffolk

General Conclusions.

This study has been undertaken with the purpose of examining the historical background to and present operating conditions of the public transport network of East Suffolk, to see whether specific problems can be identified and analysed. Particular attention has been given to the problems faced by the public transport operators, rather than by the users, as a comprehensive study of the latter would have required many more resources than were available in time, finance and manpower. Nevertheless the needs of the public transport users are considered wherever possible throughout the study.

Some of the problems faced by the transport operators arise from the manner in which public demand for the various available modes of passenger transport have evolved in recent decades, whereas others result from changes in government policies at national and local level.

Railway Passenger Services.

The limited extent of railway passenger services in the county by the end of the 1950s has meant that the identification and study of many of the major problems facing individual lines has not presented too many difficulties. The studies of individual lines show the depth of concern felt by local rail users and many local authorities that surviving rail services should be retained on a basis of social need rather than economic expediency. The desire for retention of the East Suffolk Line between Ipswich and Lowestoft is very clear.

The 'before and after' study of the closure of the Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth branch and its effects on usage of the East Suffolk

Line provides much evidence to support the thesis that the economics involved in the operation of individual railway passenger services must not be considered in isolation from services on adjacent lines, which could be seriously affected by reductions in contributory revenue from lines which are closed.

The surviving railway passenger network in East Suffolk is composed of those lines which emerged from the difficult period during the early 1960s, when social need was given less importance by central government officials and British Railways administrators than was the seemingly endless chase after a favourable national balance sheet. The introduction of social grant legislation in the late 1960s has given the remaining railway services security for the immediate future but there remains the threat that a future national government, faced with an economic crisis, might decide that railway closures would be an easy way to reduce expenditure.

Road Passenger Transport.

Many of the economic and social problems which confronted the railways in the early and mid 1960s have more recently caught up with the operators of road passenger transport services in East Suffolk and throughout Britain. On the whole road operators have followed courses of action very similar to those followed by British Railways. Withdrawals of rural bus services have been widespread and many of the remaining routes in rural East Suffolk are maintained with the help of national and local government grants. Many services in the towns of Lowestoft and Ipswich are also supported from the borough rating system.

The mood of the local authorities in East Suffolk seems to have moved towards the realisation that an efficient public transport

system needs to be made available to as much of the county's population as possible, whether it can be made to show an overall operating profit or not. Nevertheless the future of many individual rural bus services is still in danger and the proliferation of official reports on the economic and social problems of rural transport in Britain published in the past two decades seem to have had remarkably little effect in practical terms.

The urban bus services in East Suffolk are in a stronger position than those in the more rural parts of the county but competition from personal transport modes is still growing at a steady rate and the local authorities in Ipswich and Lowestoft must both recognize that an efficient and comprehensive public transport network should be one of the foremost considerations when changes in the urban environment are being planned.

Aspects of road passenger transport operation in East Suffolk which deserve more detailed study than has been given by this work include; the operation of buses, coaches and taxis for private hire, express services and excursions. These activities are of great importance to many of the independent operators in the county but statistics for these aspects of their operations are almost impossible to obtain. The operation of transport for schoolchildren was also very important to the independent operators until recently, but much of this is now undertaken by East Suffolk County Council in its own vehicles. Scholars transport has not been examined specifically in this study, although its importance in providing regular income for some of the rural routes operated by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company is still great, although declining.

Developments in national transportation policies for both road and

rail have been taking place at a rapid pace in recent years and it seems very likely that the quality and quantity of public transport services provided in East Suffolk will undergo further changes in the near future. Several problems examined in this study, such as the need for a restructuring of urban bus services in Lowestoft and the need for long term security for social grant-aided railway and bus services, remain to be firmly resolved (December 1973).

Appendix 1 Vehicles Allocated to **Eastern Counties** Omnibus Company Garages in **East Suffolk. 1962 - 1972.**

Date	Garage	d/d.	s/d.	ch.		d/d.	s/d.	ch.
17.6.62	Lowestoft	19	6	7				
	Ipswich	32	46	13	Total	56	65	23
	Felixstowe	3	8	3	%	38·9	45·1	16·0
	Saxmundham	2	5	0				
18.6.63	Lowestoft	20	5	8				
	Ipswich	33	48	11	Total	60	63	23
	Felixstowe	5	6	3	%	41·1	43·2	15·8
	Saxmundham	2	4	1				
1.3.64	Lowestoft	17	6	1				
	Ipswich	36	44	8	Total	57	60	9
	Felixstowe	2	6	0	%	45·2	47·6	7·1
	Saxmundham	2	4	0				
1.5.64	Lowestoft	17	6	1				
	Ipswich	37	43	11	Total	58	59	12
	Felixstowe	2	6	0	%	45·0	45·7	9·3
	Saxmundham	2	4	0				
1.6.65	Lowestoft	20	6	9				
	Ipswich	35	44	14	Total	63	60	26
	Felixstowe	5	6	3	%	42·3	40·3	17·4
	Saxmundham	3	4	0				
1.2.67	Lowestoft	17	8	1				
	Ipswich	32	41	12	Total	54	59	14
	Felixstowe	3	5	0	%	42·5	46·5	11·0
	Saxmundham	2	5	1				
1.7.67	Lowestoft	20	10	9				
	Ipswich	33	37	15	Total	59	57	29
	Felixstowe	4	5	3	%	40·7	39·3	20·0
	Saxmundham	2	5	2				
1.6.68	Lowestoft	19	11	9				
	Ipswich	34	31	19	Total	57	53	33
	Felixstowe	3	5	3	%	39·9	37·1	23·1
	Saxmundham	1	6	2				
1.5.69	Lowestoft	13	12	4				
	Ipswich	29	35	17	Total	47	57	25
	Felixstowe	3	5	3	%	36·4	44·2	19·4
	Saxmundham	2	5	1				
1.2.71	Lowestoft	11	17	0				
	Ipswich	22	47	9	Total	36	77	9
	Felixstowe	2	6	0	%	29·5	63·1	7·4
	Saxmundham	1	7	0				
1.2.72	Lowestoft	10	16	3				
	Ipswich	19	31	16	Total	33	56	21
	Felixstowe	2	5	1	%	30·0	50·9	19·1
	Saxmundham	2	4	1				

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